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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Agenda item 103 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for having organized this important high-level meeting to review the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Human trafficking constitutes a grave violation of fundamental human rights. It deprives our young people, women and children of their most basic human rights. Unfortunately, it has also become a lucrative business for those who perpetuate it. Such violations of fundamental human rights continue to pose a serious threat to our societies, especially to the most vulnerable groups of people, such as women and children, who make up 60 per cent of the total victims in many parts of the world.

Against that backdrop, the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action and other relevant international anti-trafficking instruments is a matter of urgency. Although a number of anti-trafficking measures and undertakings have been adopted and carried out over the years, their implementation on the ground has not yet been adequately effective in preventing further crime and sparing victims. It is important for more efforts to be exerted at all levels, and for greater focus to be given to the root causes of such crimes.

We all admit that poverty is one of the root causes of human trafficking. It is often impoverished communities that are likely to be drawn to human trafficking. Poverty can coerce innocent people to perpetuate such crimes, as it is an easy way to earn income, and poverty can make innocent people victims of trafficking. In that context, the best way to combat such crime is to focus greater effort on addressing poverty and ensuring stable and sound economic development to create more jobs and opportunities for local people. Human trafficking should be addressed in a comprehensive manner and in conjunction with socioeconomic development.

Another important aspect in the fight against human trafficking is regional cooperation. Global cooperation is important, but regional cooperation is the key, as 75 per cent of all human trafficking cases occurred at the regional level, between neighbouring countries. Adopting regional and subregional anti-trafficking strategies and programmes that incorporate the regional perspective and relevant conditions is commendable. In that context, my delegation has been strongly supportive of the ongoing regional and subregional

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anti-trafficking initiatives, especially within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons, and in the Greater Mekong Subregion, through the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking. Under that subregional framework, six countries — namely, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic — work closely together in various areas, in particular prevention, law enforcement and the provision of assistance to victims, to name just a few. At present, we are implementing the third subregional plan of action, which is regularly reviewed.

The Lao Government is committed to combating human trafficking and has undertaken various actions and measures against it over the years. The national supervisory committee on anti- trafficking was set up in 2004. Since then, we have adopted our first national strategy and plan of action on anti- trafficking, which recognizes poverty as one of the main causes of trafficking in persons. The strategy focuses on such areas as prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance and public awareness.

Under the national strategy and plan of action, a number of preventative programmes have been adopted to raise public awareness about human trafficking, and more perpetuators are being sentenced and prosecuted in accordance with the national law. Fourteen cases have been investigated since early this year, involving 20 traffickers and 49 trafficked victims, most of whom were women under the age of 18. Of those cases, nine have been prosecuted.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a State party to various international instruments on anti-trafficking, including the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three optional Protocols. As a State party to those conventions, the Lao Government has strengthened its national legislation and regulations, making the punishment of the perpetuators of human trafficking stiffer, including an amendment to the national penal code and the reinforcement of various measures on anti-trafficking.

Let me take this opportunity to extend the Lao Government's gratitude to the international community and the United Nations system, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in particular, as well as civil society, for their continued support in the fight against human trafficking. Nevertheless, we would like to call for further strengthening of cooperation among all stakeholders to tackle these organized crimes, taking into account the differences and specific needs of each country.

Mr. Nina (Albania): Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77). We would like to make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

Three years ago, we adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, thereby reaffirming our commitment to continue our fight against human trafficking as one of the most shameful manifestations of criminal activity. It is indeed highly regrettable that, as confirmed by the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, trafficking in human beings is still estimated to be the fastest growing transnational activity in the world. It results in gross violations of human rights and of the dignity of the victims. We therefore welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which gives us an opportunity to review the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

Albania supported the establishment through the Global Plan of Action of a Voluntary Trust Fund for victims, which provides for small grants to organizations that help survivors of trafficking in persons. As one of the countries in which frontline non-governmental organizations have benefited from the Trust Fund, we note with appreciation the pledges made by Member States during this high-level meeting.

We would also like to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its comprehensive *Global Report on Trafficking on Persons*, released last December, which was one of the key outcomes of the Global Plan of Action. The report correctly points out several positive aspects of the progress made globally since the entry into force of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, in 2003, such as the criminalization of trafficking by 134 countries. However, we are extremely concerned about the worrying findings of the report concerning the increase in child and girl victims, which we believe constitutes a strong call for urgent action by Member States, the United Nations, regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.

The Republic of Albania remains strongly committed to the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Albanian legal system defines trafficking as first and foremost a violation of human rights and an assault to the dignity and integrity of the human being. In line with the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention, our approach to trafficking is based on the human rights of the victims and focuses on prevention, the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of victims. With a view to addressing current trends in human trafficking in a holistic and comprehensive way, we are currently giving further consideration to the improvement of the legal and policy framework.

We are also aware that trafficking in human beings occurs both within and across borders, the latter form indeed including the crossing of many borders to reach the final destination. Trafficking in human beings is often a transnational criminal activity, perpetrated by organized networks that are typically mobile and adapt rapidly to change by redeploying. Collective actions are therefore a must to successfully combat human trafficking, and we remain committed to increasing regional and international cooperation and to strengthening partnerships.

In that context, in 2012, our law enforcements agencies successfully conducted 11 joint operations with agencies from several countries across Europe, all of which resulted in prosecution processes against the perpetrators. Current trends in the Republic of Albania show that there was a decline in 2012 in the number of detected victims of trafficking. However, there has been a significant increase in the number of detected foreign citizens trying to illegally transit the country towards the countries of Western Europe. To tackle the emerging trends, the Office of the Coordinator against Human Trafficking is continuing to train border police personnel, aiming at the specialized and timely detection of any possible victims of trafficking among foreign citizens and the provision of the necessary protection.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that every country is affected by human trafficking in different ways. We therefore hope that this meeting will provide for increased cooperation, coordination and sharing of best practices among different actors engaged in combating the gruesome reality of this modern-day slavery.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): My delegation would like to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which provides us a good opportunity for Member States, United Nations system organizations and civil society to appraise the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, as well as the Palermo Protocol.

Trafficking in persons is a crime against the dignity of human beings and a serious violation of human rights. Member States have a shared responsibility to eliminate this heinous crime. The 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which was prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in accordance with the Global Plan of Action, makes a valuable contribution to enhancing our understanding on this issue. The report shows that approximately 75 per cent of the victims detected globally are women or girls, with another 10 per cent being boys. Those figures illustrate that people who are vulnerable, including women and children, are the main targets of trafficking.

It is important to reach victims in vulnerable circumstances, strengthen their capacity and help them to reintegrate smoothly into society. However, the modes of operation of perpetrators are becoming ever more sophisticated and invisible, making it difficult to detect and rescue victims. For instance, in Japan, it is reported that brokers are trying to have the victims obtain visas through such means as sham marriages.

The fight against trafficking in persons is one of the most important policy areas for the Government of Japan. Therefore, based on the Palermo Protocol, in 2009 the Government established an action plan to combat trafficking in persons in order to further the united efforts of the relevant authorities to tackle this increasingly sophisticated crime. The plan was the result of two consultation sessions with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and ongoing discussions in a working group made up of Government authorities and NGOs. It is a comprehensive plan, covering the "four P's" — prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships. Its implementation is regularly followed up.

Furthermore, our inter-ministerial task force on combating trafficking in persons recently adopted two sets of guidelines to help implement the action plan effectively. Those on identifying victims familiarize officers with how to deal with trafficking cases and

encourage information-sharing and cooperation among the relevant authorities, including the police, immigration control authorities, women's advisory offices, child guidance centres and labour standards inspection offices. The second set of guidelines, on the protection of victims, draws the relevant officials' attention to the importance of ensuring victims' security, taking their status as victims into account even when their activities while being trafficked constitute a crime, and taking steps to stabilize their legal status, including extending visas and granting special permission to stay in Japan. Those guidelines also highlight the necessity for women's advisory offices to provide victims with support in the form of food, clothing, shelter, interpretation services, counselling and medical care.

In addition to such efforts, in our country we recognize the importance of strong partnerships between States of destination and origin. In order to share information effectively with States of origin, Japan has dispatched a delegation on anti-human-trafficking measures to several countries, and has held joint task-force meetings with one country. There are many issues to be addressed in States of origin and transit, such as capacity-building of law-enforcement officers and the protection, support and reintegration of victims. Japan has therefore contributed to various technical assistance projects, many of them in Southeast Asia, either bilaterally or through the UNODC, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. In order to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, it is essential to raise awareness among citizens as well as Governments. Japan is committed to tackling this issue, in close cooperation with other Member States, the relevant United Nations entities and civil society.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to recognize the importance of this meeting, which enables us to assess the progress we have made and the areas where we should be enhancing our efforts to implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

This is a modern form of slavery that degrades people, reducing them to chattel to be traded and exploited, and directly harming the human rights and fundamental freedoms of millions of men, women and children. As a form of transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons is a complex crime by which numerous countries can simultaneously become places of origin, transit and destination for victims, making it very difficult to identify the criminal organizations involved and the connections that exist between them. In the light of this issue, and confronted with the necessity of coming up with a concerted international response to a crime that is clearly transnational, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/293, which approved the Plan of Action and thereby established an effective tool for responding to the various dimensions and features of human trafficking.

In that context, in accordance with the supplementary Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Colombia has made progress in fighting this criminal phenomenon in the areas of prevention, awareness, protection and assistance to victims, as well as in investigation and prosecution. All the Colombian Government's efforts are enshrined in a 2005 law that classifies human trafficking as a crime, creates an inter-agency committee to combat trafficking in persons and promotes the implementation of a national strategy and plan of action against human trafficking, among other activities.

Concerning criminalization, in Colombia trafficking in persons is considered a crime when someone is detained, transported, admitted or harboured, within our national territory or outside it, for the purposes of exploitation. This last element is fundamental to Colombia's comprehensive fight against trafficking in persons, since efforts to derive profit, financially or otherwise, for oneself or for others, by using people for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, for forced labour or services, slavery or services resembling slavery, servitude, using others for begging, forced marriage, organ removal, sexual tourism and other forms of exploitation are considered crimes in Colombia.

One example of the progress Colombia has made is the high degree of institutionalization and commitment to fighting human trafficking. In 2005, with the creation of our institutional committee for combating trafficking in persons, a guiding and consultative body composed of 14 national entities, with the aim of implementing the comprehensive national strategy for combating trafficking in persons, consisting of four strategic areas — prevention; protection and assistance for victims; international cooperation; and investigation and prosecution.

With regard to prevention, Colombia, together with civil-society, private-sector and international organizations, is conducting awareness-raising campaigns about the crime and its various manifestations, as well as training programmes for prosecutors based on specific protocols for prosecuting cases of human trafficking using simulated trials, aimed at creating and developing practical tools enabling officials to identify and effectively prosecute this crime. For protection and assistance, through which we seek to ensure assistance and comprehensive and qualified protection for victims of human trafficking by developing protection mechanisms within our administrative, investigative and prosecution systems, we have created an anti-trafficking operating centre, designed to coordinate the relevant institutions in providing legal aid and support to victims during the criminal process, with the goal of ensuring their personal security, due process and freedom from discriminatory treatment.

Colombia has strengthened the national bodies responsible for investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons in order to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness in prosecuting and punishing criminal conduct. That has enabled us to implement a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, whereby just in the past year the national police have succeeded in disbanding more than 10 transnational networks engaged in human trafficking, and the Prosecutor General has initiated 107 investigations that have resulted in 22 convictions.

Finally, in the context of international cooperation, Colombia is making efforts to strengthen mechanisms at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. To that end, Colombia has implemented three strategies. The first is to propose the signing of bilateral memorandums of understanding to combat the trafficking in persons. The second is to promote the conclusion of bilateral plans of action to combat transnational organized crime, which includes the crime of trafficking in persons. And the third is to advocate for meetings of high-level security and justice bodies.

While significant progress has been made to date, the scope and characteristics of the problem illustrate the need to work even more decisively to go beyond an approach focused solely on law enforcement and punishment. As set out in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, a focus on protection and assistance to victims should guide all the actions of the international community to address this crime.

Colombia believes that it is essential to achieve greater commitment by all States to ensure the protection of victims and prevent their re-victimization. We need to strengthen cooperation mechanisms to enable the voluntary repatriation of trafficking victims and ensure full respect for their rights, security and integrity. Accordingly, we believe that it is necessary to rigorously strengthen and implement labour laws that would require companies to take measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the production and distribution chains.

The global phenomenon of trafficking in persons requires coordinated efforts by all States represented in this Hall today. In that context, the Trafficking in Persons Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons are crucial frameworks for action to unite our political, technical and operational capacities and to address this phenomenon together.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Official reports on the increasing numbers with regard to trafficking in persons in many parts of the world, especially children and women, point to an alarming situation that we need to address. To do so effectively, the full cooperation of all members of the international community is required.

Given the transborder nature of the crime, coordination and cooperation at the international level is a sine qua non for serious efforts towards combating it. We believe that the international community should strengthen and enforce effective measures to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons. To that end, the demand side for trafficked victims, especially in rich countries, should be addressed and suppressed, and victims, in particular women and children, who are mostly subject to forced labour, sexual or commercial exploitation, violence and sexual abuse, should be protected.

Furthermore, we express our serious concern with the increasing number of reported incidents of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, as well as trafficking in organs, tissues and cells.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that, while combating trafficking in persons, the root

causes of this crime should be also addressed by the international community at the same time. Economic and cultural poverty, unemployment, a lack of socioeconomic opportunities, the many forms of violence, the lack of security, especially in conflict situations, discrimination and marginalization, as well as global financial crises, are some of the contributing factors that make persons vulnerable to trafficking. We therefore encourage Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies to share information, experiences and good practices on anti-trafficking activities, in particular on combating trafficking in persons. We would like also to emphasize the role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, including as coordinator of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

At the national level, article 156 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has established crime prevention as a responsibility of the country's judiciary branch. Furthermore, nine years ago, our Parliament passed legislation entitled the Combating Human Trafficking Law. The legislation consists of eight articles that criminalize and penalize all forms of human trafficking. Articles 4 and 7 of the law stipulate that any Iranian individual, whether official or private, living inside or outside the country, who commits human trafficking will be tried, prosecuted and punished by a competent court. As the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicates, 46 human trafficking gangs were dismantled by our special police force in recent months, with 147 persons arrested during anti-trafficking operations.

With regard to protection, the State welfare organization and the country's municipalities address the socioeconomic and psychological needs of the victims of trafficking in persons.

As both a transit and destination country for drug trafficking, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been active in combating drug trafficking, particularly across its borders. As human trafficking networks form nexuses with other criminal activities ranging from money laundering to prostitution, child pornography, slavery and drug trafficking , it is important that the international community consider the possible links among those criminal activities and be prepared to combat them with vigour when necessary.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of my Government to combating trafficking in persons, as well as its readiness to cooperate with other stakeholders in that regard.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Allow me to join other delegations in thanking the President for convening this high-level meeting. Botswana welcomes the opportunity afforded by this meeting to contribute to the review of the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other speakers for their inspiring opening statements (see A/67/PV.77). We would also like to thank United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which forms the basis for our discussions today.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Botswana attaches great importance to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which the General Assembly adopted in July 2010. Although not an end in itself, the Plan of Action is significant in that it provides comprehensive and all-encompassing measures aimed at addressing human trafficking. It therefore contributes to the implementation of other related international instruments on trafficking in persons. While highlighting key aspects of trafficking, the Plan also places a high premium on a human-rights based and victim-centred approach to addressing the problem.

Since the adoption of the Global Plan of Action, almost three years ago, we recognize the significant progress that has been made by the United Nations to achieve greater coordination in and support for national efforts to combat trafficking in persons. We should therefore not allow the momentum that has been generated up to this point through the adoption of that historic Plan of Action to peter out.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the strong focus on trafficking maintained by other parts of the United Nations system, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. In that regard, we welcome the work of the relevant treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs as they continue to highlight the issue in

their concluding observations and recommendations in the reports submitted by States parties.

We are also encouraged by the efforts and measures taken by many countries to combat trafficking, including the development and implementation of comprehensive national anti-trafficking laws, action plans and enhanced cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels. All those efforts are indicative of our resolve and commitment to collective action in that regard.

Trafficking in persons has become a major social and economic phenomenon in all countries. Despite its prominence on the international agenda and the efforts made to raise public awareness about the problem, many countries, including my own, remain fertile ground for traffickers who capitalize on vulnerabilities created by poverty, inequality, unemployment and a general lack of opportunities for many in our populations, especially women, who constitute the majority of the poor in most societies.

The pattern of trafficking in persons observed in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region indicates that almost all SADC countries are source countries, while others are transit and destination countries. Due to its location and proximity to neighbouring countries, Botswana has been used as a trafficking route and hub for traffickers. The prevailing trend in cross-border trafficking in the region shows that women and girls constitute the majority of those trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Botswana and other countries in the SADC region recognize the existence of the problem of trafficking in persons and the need to effectively address it, as evidenced by the efforts that individual Member States are actively pursuing. To that end, there is a growing awareness of the need for well-coordinated joint initiatives at the regional and national levels designed to develop harmonized legislation and policies to address the menace. In that regard, our efforts as a country continue to be guided by regional instruments such as the 10-year SADC Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women And Children. We are currently in the process of drafting anti-human-trafficking legislation in Botswana. Various stakeholders in our country continue to work together to address issues related to trafficking.

Although the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* indicates that reasonable progress has been made in the fight against trafficking, we remain concerned about the persistence and prevalence of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls. The worrying trend of an increase in child victims, and the increase in the number of girl victims in particular, is a matter of grave concern to my delegation. I therefore wish to stress the importance of taking effective action against trafficking in women and girls, lest those responsible for the heinous crime that is trafficking continue to act with impunity.

While we acknowledge that a lack of specific legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons undermines all ongoing efforts by Governments, we also note that the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws continues to pose a challenge for many States, as demonstrated by the low number of prosecutions where such laws exist. In that regard, Botswana strongly shares the view that priority should continue to be accorded to strengthening national efforts to prosecute and punish perpetrators and, most important, build the capacity of States, specifically the capacity of institutions and professionals involved in the response to trafficking in persons.

In view of the great importance that Botswana attaches to the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, my delegation fully supports the calls for strengthening the capacity of that entity in order to assist Member States in implementing all four of the pillars in the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and other existing related international instruments.

Trafficking in persons needs to be viewed as a shared responsibility among States. We therefore believe that the international community has the tools to combat that challenge, which is by no means an insurmountable problem. What is needed is to stand united for a common purpose for the common good of humankind. We also recognize the importance of the need for a continuous evaluation and monitoring of our efforts and measures undertaken at all levels in order to assess their effectiveness in combating trafficking.

I wish to conclude by emphasizing the need for greater political will and commitment to fight the crime of trafficking in persons. In that regard, I reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action and other relevant regional and international instruments aimed at combating trafficking in persons.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): Allow me, at the outset, to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly and the facilitators — the Permanent Representative of Austria and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde — for their work in preparing this high-level meeting. My delegation believes that the convening of this meeting is timely and much needed, given that human trafficking continues to be a widespread crime that affects many Member States.

Together with the rest of the international community, Malaysia condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous crimes of trafficking in persons. We are seriously committed and are making every effort within our means to address and eventually eradicate the problem.

Malaysia attaches great importance to the implementation of the landmark Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in resolution 64/293 in 2010. Through the Plan, Governments have agreed to take concrete action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute related crimes and strengthen partnerships among governmental institutions and all the different stakeholders.

For our part, Malaysia enacted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act in 2007, which was later amended to become the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act of 2010. Amendments were necessary to close loopholes and expand the scope of the law to address the problem of smuggling of migrants. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2007 allowed for the establishment of what has become, since the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act 2010, the Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants. The Council is responsible for the formulation of policies and the implementation of the 2010 national action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

Despite our comprehensive approach to the problem, we are faced with a multitude of challenges. As we have become both a destination country and a transit country, and even, to a lesser extent, a country of origin, we have been put in an unenviable position of having to examine the problem from a bird-eye's view. Unenviable though it may be, it does have its advantages in that it has allowed us to appreciate the enormity of the challenge that lies before us. Through our experience, we have learned that cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries is essential in our common efforts to combat the ugly scourge of trafficking in persons.

Malaysia therefore welcomes the launching of the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, prepared pursuant to the resolution 64/293. The report provides us with comprehensive and reliable data on the offenders, the victims and the trafficking flows throughout regions in order to combat this ugly scourge more effectively. We are pleased to note that the report is the first of its kind and sheds light on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons.

My delegation remains seriously concerned that women account for almost 60 per cent of all trafficked victims detected globally, followed by children, at 27 per cent. While the widespread ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children is viewed as a success story, we need to do more. Valuable and all-encompassing though the Protocol may be, without a doubt the main challenge that lies before States parties is to implementation the provisions contained therein.

In conclusion, Malaysia believes that the international community must be cautious in dealing with the issue so as not to divert resources and attention from addressing the underlying causes of human trafficking and people smuggling. In that regard, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of addressing the supply element in countries of origin, in particular contributing factors such as poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): Trafficking in persons is a flagrant violation of human dignity and a heinous and shameful crime. Singapore strongly condemns it. We are fully committed to implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

As a regional transport hub, Singapore is unfortunately susceptible to being used by trafficking syndicates. That has further strengthened our resolve to combat trafficking in persons. Our efforts are holistic and aligned with the four elements covered under the Global Plan of Action, which include the prevention of trafficking in persons, the protection of victims, the prosecution of offenders and the strengthening of partnerships with foreign Governments, civil society and other stakeholders. Singapore has put in place

a national plan of action to map out our strategies to counter trafficking.

Our prevention efforts are underpinned by strong partnerships with stakeholders within and beyond our borders. We have strengthened the capacity of our law enforcement and labour officers to deal with trafficking cases. We have also deployed police liaison officers in a few neighbouring countries to serve as contact points for cases of transnational crime, including trafficking in persons. Our authorities hold pre-departure briefings and roadshows in selected countries to educate foreign workers on their employment rights and avenues for assistance. Regular dialogues on labour isues are also held with embassies based in Singapore.

We recognize the expertise of, and value the important role played by, civil society organizations in the fight against trafficking. The relevant Singapore authorities engage civil society regularly in the development of policy initiatives. They have a good working relationship with civil society in the referral of trafficking cases and the provision of services to trafficked victims.

Although Singapore is not yet party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, we have adopted the Protocol's definition of trafficking in persons for our operational purposes. The Singapore Government is currently reviewing our existing laws and exploring the feasibility of establishing separate legislation. Those efforts are complemented by ongoing work to enact an organized crime act that would target organized criminal groups and criminal activities.

In line with our support for the Global Plan of Action, Singapore is working with member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in considering the development of a regional plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and an ASEAN convention on trafficking in persons. The proposed regional plan of action will be aligned with, and support the implementation of, the Global Plan of Action. Such regional instruments will focus on law enforcement cooperation, victim care and protection initiatives. They are envisaged to be a comprehensive response to the trafficking problem that will also take into account local culture and Government and different legal systems.

Singapore reiterates our firm commitment to combat trafficking in persons. We remain vigilant and will continue to improve our policy measures and do our part in tackling this scourge.

Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Yury Fedotov, for their insightful opening remarks. My appreciation also goes to the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking, Ms. Mira Sorvino, and the President of Vital Voices Global Partnership, Ms. Alyse Nelson, for their statements at the opening plenary meeting (see A/67/PV.77). My delegation would also like to express its gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their efforts in preparing this high-level meeting.

Human trafficking is a heinous criminal activity that constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. It ruthlessly exploits the most vulnerable groups, in particular women and children. While strong and consistent condemnation by the international community has led to significant normative progress to end this egregious crime, human trafficking still remains a daunting challenge in many parts of the world.

Against that backdrop, the adoption of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 was a significant milestone not only in reaffirming the commitments of the international community to end human trafficking, but also in translating our will into concrete action on the ground. This high-level meeting provides a timely opportunity to assess the progress achieved and to identify remaining challenges in the implementation of this landmark Plan of Action. The Plan of Action underlines four areas, namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnershi In that regard, I would like to focus on the following points in the implementation of the Action Plan.

First, the fight against impunity is key to combating crimes of human trafficking. In that regard, the low conviction rate for human trafficking indicated in the UNODC 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* is a cause for disappointment. Without ensuring accountability for trafficking crimes, we can never expect to address this issue fundamentally. Further efforts need to be made towards enacting and enforcing

legislation, as well as investigating, prosecuting and punishing those responsible for such criminal activities.

As for the Republic of Korea, we recently amended the criminal act to introduce a new provision that deals with human trafficking comprehensively. Even before that amendment, all types of exploitation were punishable before the law. With the new amendment, however, we have become better equipped with a stronger legal basis for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking. In follow-up to that amendment, we are planning to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

Secondly, given the transnational nature of human trafficking, we need to further promote effective cooperation and coordination among countries, United Nations agencies and other international organizations. My delegation commends the important role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons in fostering coordination and cooperation in the global fight against trafficking in persons. We also welcome the Group's plan to publish a series of issue papers this year.

For our part, we have been actively engaged in regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. We have also strengthened our participation in international legal frameworks in the field of law enforcement, technical assistance and capacity-building. At present, we have concluded extradition treaties with 77 countries and have signed treaties on mutual legal assistance with 68 countries.

We also need to further strengthen the protection of victims of trafficking and the provision of assistance to them. In that regard, we commend the significant work of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Fund, created through the adoption of the Action Plan, has been supporting organizations around the world in providing concrete assistance to the victims of trafficking. We also believe that the biennial *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, released by the UNODC, is contributing to better identifying victims and facilitating assistance to them.

The Korean Government has been providing protection and assistance to the victims of trafficking, including services for their physical, psychological and social recovery and rehabilitation, in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society. In that area, we are planning to launch a new cooperation initiative this year with developing countries.

The crimes of human trafficking are often described as unthinkable and unspeakable. My delegation hopes that this high-level meeting will serve as a significant occasion to show our unwavering determination to end human trafficking with one voice. The Korean Government reaffirms its commitment to the global efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): The information available to us presents a highly troubling situation. The consequences for the world, countries, communities and people, including women and children, are certainly very broad and deep. While we note the progress achieved through our efforts, the challenges are enormous, complex and multifaceted. In that context, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by Member States in 2010, is a crucial milestone.

Combating human trafficking vis-à-vis a comprehensive approach has consistently been a priority of the Government of Viet Nam and part of our policy. Our experience shows that the socioeconomic root causes must always be dealt with in parallel with crime-fighting efforts. Crime prevention and victim assistance must be essential components.

The strong political commitment of Viet Nam to address the problem of human trafficking is reflected in the large number of important laws, policies, programmes and plans of action we have adopted in many areas, in accordance with the four main pillars of the Global Plan of Action, namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. The most recent was the law adopted by the National Assembly of Viet Nam in 2011 on preventing and combating human trafficking. Among other things, the law expands the definition of human trafficking and provides for various measures and obligations on the part of the State, organizations and individuals.

The Government's national action plan against trafficking in persons for the period from 2011 to 2015 aims at protecting all Vietnamese citizens and foreigners living in Viet Nam from human trafficking. It deals with events in Viet Nam and across the Vietnamese border, in cooperation with other countries and international

organizations. The plan consists of five major projects on information and awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building for multidisciplinary teams, victim protection and assistance, strengthening the legal system, monitoring the implementation of laws and policies, and strengthening international cooperation in combating human trafficking.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Viet Nam has one of the highest trafficker conviction rates in the world. Currently, in implementing the law against human trafficking, the People's Supreme Procuracy, in cooperation with the relevant ministries and Government agencies, is drafting an inter-agency circular to detail guidance on crimes related to human trafficking and raise the penalties for such crimes. The mass media in Viet Nam play a significant role in mobilizing public support and exposing crimes.

Viet Nam has ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and strictly complies with its obligations under those instruments. Viet Nam has bilateral agreements and has undertaken cooperative activities with all neighbouring and regional countries to prevent and fight human trafficking. In that regard, we commend the UNODC in Viet Nam for its contribution to the signing of a number of memorandums of understanding on cooperation to fight human trafficking and the trafficking in persons for the purposes of labour, as well as on mutual legal assistance in the region.

Viet Nam has also been participating in many other regional and international initiatives and processes on migration in general and on the prevention of illegal migration and human trafficking in particular, including the process of the Inter-governmental Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants, the Asia–European Union Dialogue on Labour Migration, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking and the Interparliamentary Organization Forum on Legal Cooperation to Combat Human Trafficking of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Government and various Vietnamese organizations have worked effectively with the UNODC and many other international governmental and non-governmental organizations in that regard. Experience also shows that abuse or politicization by any organization or individual for their selfish interests of issues related to human trafficking hinders cooperation, therefore in effect hampering the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking is deeply rooted in vulnerability to poverty, gender inequality and violence against women, the lack of opportunities and employment and the lack of access to education and discrimination. In that connection, the Government has put in place various measures to address economic and social inequalities by adopting national action plans, strategies and projects in a number of areas of socioeconomic life. Other measures at the local level include income-generating groups, vocational training, job placement and capital provision.

Viet Nam would like to reiterate its commitment to the fight against human trafficking and looks forward to continuing to cooperate with the international community to that end. We sincerely hope that this meeting will significantly add to the common efforts to fight human trafficking.

Mr. Al-Mesallam (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, please allow me to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for having convened this meeting to evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. This is a unique and important opportunity for all Member States to evaluate the advances made and identify the areas that need to be addressed.

The crime of trafficking in persons is a serious violation of fundamental human rights. Such violations of human rights and other types violations cannot be tolerated. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the efforts made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to combat trafficking in persons at the international level. We particularly welcome the 2012 UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which allows for an unprecedented understanding of information on the measures undertaken at the international level to end the phenomenon of human trafficking. The report also touches on the activities aimed at giving Member States support in eliminating the scourge and in implementing protocols and conventions in that area.

The crime of trafficking in persons holds third place on the list of the most profitable international crimes,

after illicit trafficking in weapons and illicit trafficking in drugs. According to the UNODC report, trafficking in children, especially girls, is a phenomenon that continues to grow; it now represents 27 per cent of the victims identified. Clearly, the issue of trafficking in persons is closely linked to poverty, since the victims of trafficking come from the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society, namely, women and children. The protection of victims is therefore related to the empowerment of those social groups through meeting their basic needs and adopting policies and programmes aimed at eliminating unemployment, inequality and poverty.

The high-level participation at today's meeting reflects the importance of advancing the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to eliminating this heinous crime. as well as their determination to prevent and combat it, to protect victims and to improve partnerships in that regard.

We in Qatar pay special attention to the Global Plan of Action. In the context of the Plan, we have been able to translate our political will into concrete innovative measures aimed at halting the phenomenon of human trafficking. In 2011, we adopted a law to combat trafficking in persons, which ascribes criminal liability to all forms of trafficking in persons. The State of Qatar also participates actively in international and regional efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons. We respect and apply the human values and principles that are enshrined in our Constitution and the values associated with respect for human rights, which is reflected in my country's foreign and domestic policies.

For example, the State of Qatar sponsored the Arab Initiative for Building National Capacities for Combating Human Trafficking in Arab countries, in partnership with the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, the UNODC and the League of Arab States. Following up on the Arab Initiative, under the patronage of Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, the wife of the Emir of Qatar, the third Doha Forum on Combating Trafficking in Persons was organized in 2013, under the slogan, "Contemporary Trends in Combating Human Trafficking". The objective of the Forum was to shed light on contemporary trends and mechanisms in place in combating trafficking in persons and to support national capacities in the framework of the Arab Initiative.

Qatar is a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking. In addition, we contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, which clearly shows the importance that Qatar places on the efforts to protect victims.

The crime of trafficking in persons in all its forms and manifestations is a flagrant violation of human rights and the values enshrined in our Islamic religion and in all religions, national constitutions and international instruments. From this rostrum, I would like to reaffirm that Qatar believes that all actions undertaken in that area in our country are rooted in our absolute belief that preserving human dignity is of crucial importance. Those efforts are also an expression of our sense of social and humanitarian responsibility, through which we reinforce our religious values, our support for human rights and our respect for the international instruments to which we have acceded.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Spain is very pleased with the convening of this high-level meeting, which affords us an opportunity to share our experiences in the field of combating human trafficking and to coordinate strategies to eradicate that scourge.

In the past few years, Spain has experienced an unprecedented opening that has enabled our country to welcome 6 million migrants in the past decade alone. That has undoubtedly generated great benefits, but it has also developed human trafficking to a degree previously unknown to us, forcing us to face that sad reality.

The situation has led Spain to become fully aware of that global challenge and to design a multidisciplinary strategy focused on victims and their rights, in coordination with all the relevant ministries and competent authorities to confront the problem more efficiently.

Human trafficking is the contemporary manifestation of slavery. It implies a clear infringement of human rights and violates people's dignity, integrity, security and freedom, especially that of women and children, who represent the most vulnerable groups. Spain therefore considers it essential to apply a human rights approach when combating human trafficking. We should also keep in mind that, when fighting human trafficking for sexual exploitation, we are also fighting gender-based violence, which is one of the

most extreme forms of discrimination. In that respect, Spain supports an approach that identifies a clear link between discrimination, gender-based violence and trafficking in persons. We should also bear in mind that human trafficking is also an expression of transnational organized crime, which generates profits in the billions of euros internationally. The phenomenon is extremely serious and can only be successfully addressed through close and effective international cooperation in the areas of security among the countries of origin, transit and destination.

It is therefore crucial to work in the countries of origin in order to develop collaborative mechanisms, tools and procedures to detect and prevent the potential for trafficking in victims from some countries to others. Spain urges that both international organizations and Member States give preferential attention to victims when designing their strategies and actions to combat human trafficking. Strategies should focus on providing victims with appropriate protection and attention, as set forth in the conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was held in New York from 4 to 15 March.

In that respect, it is essential that the fight against human trafficking be addressed from a multidisciplinary perspective, so that preventive or penal responses to such crimes are accompanied by the firm commitment of States to ensure the full protection of victims' rights, with special attention being given to aspects related to legal procedures, the necessity of guaranteeing specialized legal assistance, and administrative procedures that could affect them. In that regard, as indicated in the *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking* of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

> "This is the only way to retain a focus on the trafficked persons to ensure that trafficking is not simply reduced to a problem of migration, a problem of public order or a problem of organized crime."

With the creation of its comprehensive plan to combat trafficking for sexual exploitation, Spain has achieved significant progress both internationally and domestically. At the international level, Spain subscribes to all the relevant instruments in the fight against human trafficking, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, and has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In addition, we are actively working towards increasingly close and effective international cooperation, with the goal of achieving a united front that will enable us to completely eradicate this form of modern-day slavery.

On the domestic level, Spain has adapted its legislation to comply with its international commitments, and has strengthened its protection capacity with the establishment of a protection framework protocol for victims of human trafficking. We have also set up a data management system that collects comprehensive information related to prevention activities and the work done in combating human trafficking by Spanish security forces. Finally, we have developed public awareness drives such as the Blue Heart campaign, and joined other initiatives such as the International Day against Human Trafficking on 23 September and the European Day against Human Trafficking on 18 October.

Over the course of this year, Spain is evaluating its national human-trafficking plan for 2009-2012 and is planning to formulate a comprehensive new instrument dealing with the fight against human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We are also drafting a new law that will establish a legal status for victims. And we will continue to promote the integration of victims into society and the job market. We also hope to increase funding for the mechanisms that aid victims.

Spain is firmly committed to the fight against human trafficking. The current statistics and reports on human trafficking in my country, such as those most recently published by our ombudsman's office, not only show that Spain has effective systems for identifying victims and combating trafficking but also demonstrate the Spanish authorities' transparency and level of cooperation with the relevant international organizations and institutions in fighting human trafficking.

The observer of the European Union has made a statement (see A/67/PV.77) that sets out the importance that its member States attach to this issue and that explains the European Union's efforts to combat it, which Spain has played a significant role in formulating.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba welcomes this meeting of the General Assembly and the progress made in discussions within the United Nations

on the international problem of human trafficking. We commend the work done by the facilitators, the Ambassadors of Cape Verde and Portugal, and their conduct of the consultations leading up to this meeting. We would also like to thank the delegation of Belarus for its active efforts to address this important subject.

In spite of the efforts of States, civil society and the international community as a whole, the manifestations of trafficking in persons continue to grow and diversify. This terrible crime affects millions of people around the world, mainly women and children. Human trafficking is a modern and abhorrent form of slavery. It reduces human beings to the status of chattel or merchandise that can be traded and transported within or outside countries; then, when they reach their final destinations, they are exploited and forced to work against their will, their freedom to move and communicate controlled. Trafficking violates the most basic human rights. It is a complex phenomenon, and the fight against it transcends national boundaries and demands that we strengthen international cooperation and coordination at every level in order to prevent and eradicate it.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010, is proof of the importance of tackling the problem of human trafficking through open, transparent and inclusive multilateral mechanisms, where every State has the opportunity to contribute on an equal level.

Transnational organized crime has no active presence in Cuba. Because of that, there is virtually no human trafficking, which has strong ties to such crime. Cuba therefore does not qualify as a country of origin, transit or destination for such activity. Despite the low incidence of such crime, the Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches great importance to combating trafficking in persons in all its manifestations. Traffickking is against the law in Cuba, according to the penal code. In Cuba, the definition of trafficking in persons includes promoting, organizing or inciting the entry into or exit from the country of people for the purposes of prostitution or any other form of carnal trade. Our legislation punishes perpetrators more severely in cases where the victims are children. We are currently working on refining the legal definitions of categories such as exploitation, means and forced labour, generally speaking using the definitions given in the international agreements and treaties to which Cuba is party.

Cuba firmly rejects any lists and assessments concerning human trafficking in developing countries that any State, however powerful, may establish unilaterally, selectively and for political motives. Such a practice is contrary to the principle of international cooperation and, furthermore, clearly incompatible with the goals of the Global Plan of Action. Such a selective and discriminatory practice should immediately halted.

To achieve progress and effectiveness in the international fight against human trafficking, we must put an end to all selective or discriminatory practices and double standards in dealing with this issue. Only through cooperation and a coordination of efforts among all States will real progress be made in the prevention and elimination of this crime.

Mrs. Zarrouk Boumiza (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting on a subject as important as that of human trafficking. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Trafficking in women and girls" (A/67/170), as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its continuous efforts to fight this scourge.

Tunisia fully endorses the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Recognized as a modern form of slavery, human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights and a crime against both the individual and the State that must be suppressed and punished by the law. This increasingly globalized scourge requires increased attention from the international community, which is called on today to act in a collective manner to provide appropriate solutions to this pressing problem.

We are all affected to varying degrees by this phenomenon, which takes on many different forms and varies from one country to another. Some countries suffer from slavery or forced marriage, while others suffer from sex trafficking, organ harvesting or the trafficking of illegal immigrants. Collective action is still the best way to combat trafficking in persons and avoid its harmful socioeconomic effects and negative impact on people's security and dignity.

Tunisia abolished slavery in January 1846 by adopting a law that states that every person is free, whatever their colour or gender, and that any person

violating that supreme decision would be subject to criminal sanctions. While trafficking in persons has not yet reached the level of scourge in Tunisia, my country is determined to combat the phenomenon, both at its roots and in its manifestations.

In that regard, Tunisia has ratified and acceded to several international instruments on trafficking in persons, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and, recently, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention.

In that process, legislative and institutional measures aimed at preventing and suppressing the trafficking and exploitation through prostitution of women and girls, as well as social integration for prostitutes ,were also taken. Several legal mechanisms in support of State initiatives to eradicate the phenomenon of human trafficking were implemented, such as the code for the protection of the child, which protects girls from all forms of trafficking, and the penal code to protect women and girls from all forms of trafficking by criminalizing the abduction of a person by fraud, violence or threats, child abandonment, subjection of children to prostitution, incitement to immorality or incitement to corruption and sexual harassment.

It should also be noted that my country, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, recently initiated a study to identify cases of trafficking in persons and the various facets of such trafficking in Tunisia. A national commission was established, including key stakeholders, and a bill to prohibit the trafficking in persons has been developed and presented to the National Constituent Assembly. That bill on human trafficking was prepared in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and in consultation with the relevant ministries and with the participation of civil society. It provides for, inter alia, the establishment of national structures that will deal with problems related to this topic. It is also aimed at protecting victims, who are usually women and children, and identifying the perpetrators.

However, my country remains fully convinced that in order to fight the scourge of trafficking in persons it is not enough to establish a comprehensive tool to prevent this crime, protect victims of trafficking and prosecute its perpetrators. We must also address the factors that fuel trafficking, including socioeconomic vulnerability. The fight against poverty, unemployment, discrimination, ignorance and illiteracy and efforts aimed at reducing disparities within States and between them are likely to ensure a decent and dignified life for all vulnerable groups in society.

Illegal or irregular migrants constitute one of the vulnerable groups directly exposed to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. My country believes that this group deserves greater attention from the international community. In that respect, we urge all Member States to cooperate more closely in order to identify appropriate solutions to the phenomenon of illegal immigration. Such solutions must be based on the principle of respect for human rights and human dignity and on equal and inclusive development.

Tunisia strongly condemns this scourge and urges Member States to redouble their efforts to provide adequate and effective responses to the factors that fuel human trafficking. We reiterate our commitment to actively contribute to international efforts to put an end to this phenomenon, which threatens all of humankind.

The Acting President: I would like to remind representatives that we still have 22 speakers on the list, in addition to the Chairs of two panels, who will deliver summaries. In order to enable the Assembly to complete this high-level meeting, delegations are kindly asked to limit their statements to under five minutes.

Mr. Adoumasse (Benin) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the holding of this high-level meeting on human trafficking to review the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was adopted in July 2010, as well as to identify the best ways to strengthen coordination for a more effective fight against this scourge.

Benin aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Human trafficking, in particular in women and children, constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. The United Nations and the international community as a whole have quite rightly chosen to deal with this issue at the highest level, as seen in the many resolutions and international commitments that contain extremely useful recommendations for combatting this threat. The adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome

(resolution 60/1) highlighted the fact that human trafficking remained a serious problem for humankind and that its solution required concerted international work. To that end, unstinting efforts have been undertaken to update and implement effective measures aimed at combatting and eliminating human trafficking in all its forms. Resolution 55/25, of 15 November 2000, through which the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons of 2010 constitute major steps taken in that respect. These are tools that have allowed States to incorporate the fight against human trafficking and exploitation into their national policies and to make it, to varying degrees, a priority.

Poverty, unemployment, the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, sexual violence, discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion are some of the factors that expose people to the threat of trafficking. The most vulnerable social groups, because of poverty and unemployment, represent high-risk areas on which the efforts to fight that scourge must be focused. That fight cannot succeed without a national action plan in each country and genuine coordination of the plans at the subregional and regional levels.

The Government of Benin has raised the issue of combatting human trafficking to one of its top priorities. That commitment resulted in the adoption, on 5 April 2006, of Act 2006/04, on the transport of minors and combating trafficking in children in our country, together with the development of its implementation decrees.

Benin has also developed a national policy and strategy document on social protection for the period 2004-2013, which targets those requiring more sustained attention, in particular abandoned children, street children and working children, and children not in school. That legal and normative instrument has been strengthened by the adoption of a code on persons and the family and the establishment of a brigade for the protection of minors under the Ministry of the Interior. Efforts are under way to give Benin a code for children to better establish the legal norms for the protection and promotion of children's development.

In addition to the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Benin has implemented the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa, adopted in Abuja on 6 July 2006. This inter-regional Agreement is a veritable framework for judicial cooperation to effectively and comprehensively combat this scourge.

The progress made cannot overshadow the many challenges that remain in effectively combatting this phenomenon without boundaries. Benin therefore believes that sharper focus should be placed on the protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons by strengthening the capacities of the of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We also believe it is necessary to adopt and implement, at the national, subregional and regional levels, comprehensive policies and programmes aimed at preventing all forms of human trafficking. Such policies and programmes must be consistent with the relevant guidelines in migration, education, employment, gender equality, women's empowerment and crime prevention.

Benin believes that prevention must be a fundamental pillar of the global strategy against trafficking in persons. That means that we must encourage sustainable development to better address the social, economic, cultural and economic factors that put people at risk of trafficking.

Ms. Powell-Britton (Jamaica): Jamaica welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting and expresses its gratitude to the President of the General Assembly and the representatives of Cape Verde and Austria for their efforts to make the meeting a reality.

It has been three years since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. In that regard, Jamaica believes that this is an opportune time to assess what has been done on the global level to rid the international community of the heinous crime of human trafficking.

The Government of Jamaica accords the highest level of political commitment to the fight against human trafficking and unequivocally denounces the scourge of trafficking in human beings. Jamaica reaffirms its determination to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute crimes of trafficking in persons and strengthen our local, regional

and international partnerships against trafficking in persons.

In keeping with the Global Plan of Action, as well as a host of international instruments, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Jamaica has continued to develop and strengthen its domestic, legislative and institutional framework. The overarching legislation specific to prosecuting, suppressing and preventing the trafficking in persons in Jamaica is the Trafficking in Persons Prevention, Suppression and Punishment Act of 2007. The Act sets out provisions for giving effect to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons by inter alia outlining the offence of trafficking in persons, restitution, the protection of victims, proceedings and penalties.

Although regarded as fully compliant and consistent with international and United Nations standards set by the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, over the years we have identified where the Act may be strengthened to more effectively combat trafficking in persons. As a result, Jamaica has reviewed the Act and a draft bill has been finalized and is now to be approved by the Cabinet for introduction in the Parliament. Such amendments to the Act include expanding the definition of exploitation to include debt bondage, increasing penalties from 10 years to 20 years; providing for the new offence of conspiracy, punishable by imprisonment of up to 20 years or by both a fine and imprisonment; outlining aggravating circumstances that courts may take into account in sentences and the granting of restitution to victims within the same proceedings in which the person was convicted.

The combat of trafficking in persons in Jamaica has been accorded the highest level of institutional support through the establishment of an interministerial subcommittee of the Cabinet to monitor and make recommendations on Jamaica's effort to fight trafficking in persons. A national task force against trafficking in persons was established to coordinate our response. The composition of the task force is equally reflective of the level of importance that Jamaica attaches to the issue and the holistic approach it has adopted, and spans a gamut of institutions and organizations in the fight against trafficking. The task force includes representatives from all the relevant local stakeholders — from the Government, law enforcement, the justice sector and civil society.

In spite of its constraints, Jamaica has made significant strides in addressing the issue of human trafficking. Jamaica has approved a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2012-2015, which adopts the guiding principles of the Global Plan of Action. A secretariat was established within the Ministry of Justice to support and monitor the implementation of the action plan. On the ground, since the adoption of the 2012 national plan of action, we have undertaken concrete action, including the establishment of a shelter for victims, conducting 255 raids, detecting 6 cases and rescuing 39 victims. We have redoubled our efforts in preventing and identifying trafficking in persons by expanding outreach, sensitization and training. More than 50 lectures, reaching more than 2,000 individuals, have been conducted by the Jamaica constabulary force alone. All the other relevant institutions have also mainstreamed trafficking in persons awareness in their public awareness campaigns. We have launched social media pages, conducted island-wide tours and staged outdoor and school broadcasts, reaching approximately 5,000 individuals at the location.

The Government is also presently engaged in a series of regional coordination meetings, supported by the International Organization for Migration, with other Caribbean territories to enhance the coordination of our response. Nationally, a memorandum of understanding is currently being developed to establish a standard protocol to govern data collection and information-sharing relating to trafficking in persons, victims and offenders.

Jamaica believes that the commendable work being done at the national level must be adequately supported by efforts at the international level, as no country or region has remained untouched by this gross indifference to human life. It is in that regard that Jamaica expresses its gratitude to its international partners for the support given in building capacity to combat this phenomenon. We hope that such fruitful collaboration will continue, as there is still so much work to be done. In that regard, I wish to quote our Prime Minister:

> "Our ancestors fought for our freedom. It is disgraceful that at this juncture of world history

we should see the emergence of a form of modern-day slavery that allows women, girls and boys to be traded as chattel and treated as subhuman."

Jamaica will never again allow any form of slavery or subjugation to pervade our society. Firm in its resolve for the dignity of our people, the international community can rest assure that Jamaica will continue to take bold actions in combatting this heinous activity.

Mr. Šćepanović (Montenegro): At the outset, let me join others in welcoming the holding of this high-level meeting, which provides us with an opportunity to assess achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and other relevant legal instruments. We truly believe that this meeting will provide us with a productive exchange of views on our experiences in combating human trafficking.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77).

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. To combat it, the full engagement of all stakeholders is required. Montenegro's determination in combating human trafficking can be seen in a number of activities that our Government has been pursuing. Our institutional and legal frameworks have been significantly improved as we have sought to comply with the international legal standards in the area of combating human trafficking. The coordination of the anti-trafficking activities of the relevant State bodies and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations is conducted by the Office for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Office has established a tripartite commission made up of representatives from the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court and the Police Directorate. Based on information collected from those institutions, the Office compiles statistics on victims of trafficking and monitors the course of criminal proceedings on trafficking in persons.

Montenegro is a State party to all international legal instruments on combating trafficking in persons, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons (2012-2018), adopted last year, and its biannual action plan, constitute our national policy for combating trafficking in persons. The Strategy defines objectives, principles and activities for combating trafficking in persons, as well as specific measures for improving efficiency in the established system for combating human trafficking in the public, private and civil sectors. The Strategy focuses on six areas — prevention and education; the identification of human trafficking victims; assistance, protection and reintegration for victims; efficient prosecution; international cooperation; and coordination and partnership with the private and civil sectors. The Government of Montenegro has established a working group for monitoring the implementation of the national Strategy, which is composed of representatives of the relevant ministries and other State bodies and observers from intergovernmental organizations and foreign missions.

As a result of our awareness of the importance of the participation and cooperation of all actors, including representatives of civil society, two important documents have been signed for the purposes of efficiently addressing trafficking in persons in Montenegro. The first is a memorandum of cooperation between State institutions and non-governmental organizations, which defines the responsibilities of each body and establishes operational procedures for handling human trafficking cases. The second is the Protocol of Cooperation with the Union of Employers. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in the field of action against trafficking in persons in Montenegro, through awareness-raising activities, training, assistance to victims and participation in international projects. With regard to assistance measures for victims of trafficking, the Government has taken responsibility for fully financing specialized shelter arrangements for victims of human trafficking.

Unfortunately, like many other countries, Montenegro is considered to be a transit country for trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons in Montenegro is not present as a general phenomenon, but exists, rather, at the level of individual cases. The Government of Montenegro has made significant efforts to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons through public awareness campaigns, education in elementary and secondary schools, and the training of the relevant professionals. Those activities are aimed at achieving

a better understanding of, and providing enhanced education about, the phenomenon and its prevention.

Montenegro has strategically oriented itself towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fight against human trafficking and actively participates in the work of international organizations and initiatives aimed at combating that complex phenomenon. The Government has implemented, through cooperation with international organizations, a large number of regional projects aimed at strengthening international cooperation mechanisms. The implementation of a project of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development resulted in establishing a unique and effective procedure for all institutional activities related to assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking in South-Eastern Europe. In that regard, Montenegro recently hosted a regional training programme on the theme "Capacity-building for combating trafficking for labour exploitation".

A joint declaration on strengthening transnational cooperation in human trafficking in the countries of South-Eastern Europe was the result of many years of collaboration among the national coordinators for combating trafficking in human beings of the countries of the region. The declaration emphasizes the importance of cross-border cooperation with partners in the wider European region, aimed at preventing human trafficking, protecting the rights of those who have been exploited and punishing perpetrators.

On the bilateral level, the Government of Montenegro is undertaking activities that will lead to the signing of agreements of cooperation on combating trafficking in persons with its neighbours.

Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking in persons. Therefore, the successful fight against human trafficking must include a multisectoral approach and concerted international cooperation, the implementation of effective measures in preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons, punishing perpetrators and protecting victims, as well as mandatory partnerships involving State institutions and the private and civil sectors at the national, regional and international levels.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to convey my delegation's appreciation for the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in 2010. Likewise, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their leadership in preparing this high-level meeting.

We wish to note our preference for achieving procedural agreement for this type of event with advance notice and clarity, given that the short amount of time between the adoption the resolution scheduling this meeting (resolution 67/260) and the meeting itself did not make it easy for our country to participate at as high a level as we would have liked. Nevertheless, we thank the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime for its efforts geared to provide data, coordination and assistance in helping Member States and civil society to eliminate trafficking in persons. We would like in particular to highlight the publication of the 2012 *Global Report on the Trafficking in Persons*, which clearly identifies the trends and challenges that the international community is facing in eliminating this scourge.

El Salvador would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of Belarus, both in New York and Vienna, as well as its dynamism and dedication in combating the trafficking in persons.

As a signatory and State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, El Salvador notes the importance of applying the four pillars of the Plan of Action. On that basis, we have some assessments and progress to highlight in that regard.

In 2012, my country set up its national council against trafficking in persons, which is made up of representatives of various ministries, to raise the level of commitment of the Salvadoran State in order to address the prosecution, combating and prevention of the scourge, as well as to provide care and rehabilitation to victims through the following efforts.

With respect to prevention, the President of the El Salvador, Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, together with the national council against trafficking in persons, adopted a national policy on the matter that comprehensively addresses the crime while highlighting prevention as a key pillar, among several, and sets up partnerships with governmental, non-governmental, municipal and international entities, with the aim of raising awareness and preventing the crime of

trafficking in persons at the national level by making the problem more visible and through public awareness and identifying corporate responsibility as a key player in prevention.

In the area of prevention, in 2012 we worked on drafting a law banning trafficking in persons in El Salvador and reformed the criminalization of trafficking in persons and related crimes in the Salvadoran penal code in order to have better tools to prosecute the crime and enforce the law. We expect those proposals to be presented to the Legislative Assembly this year. Similarly, in order to identify and combat crimes of trafficking in persons and migrants, we have produced a manual for immigration agents to help them address trafficking in migrants. That has led to the rescue of some victims and the capture of a series of criminals. Other measures include strict internal entry and exit controls for children and young people in order to protect those groups against possible violation of their human rights.

With regard to the prosecution of this crime, the Office of the Prosecutor of El Salvador, in coordination with the national civil police, has established new criteria aimed at achieving tougher sentences. They are working together to address trafficking in persons and are conducting aggressive operations in order to identify places of exploitation.

In the area of strengthening alliances, we have put considerable effort into cooperating with other States, both in southern Central America and in Latin America in general. Our national council on trafficking in persons is a participant in a regional coalition against such trafficking, with the aim of strengthening and expanding communication with other countries in Central America in order to address this issue comprehensively.

I would like to conclude by highlighting my country's holistic vision with regard to the fight against trafficking in persons. Eliminating trafficking goes far beyond the stakeholders — the States, civil society, and United Nations agencies that bring us together today. We need political commitment and the international mechanisms necessary to make progress in this area. We therefore urge the international community to work together to eradicate trafficking in persons.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): We thank the President for organizing this high-level meeting to evaluate the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and are grateful for the opportunity to discuss such an important issue. The implementation of the provisions of the Global Plan of Action, as well as of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, is the subject of this gathering. I hope that today's meeting will provide additional impetus and a results-oriented response to today's challenges. This is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund and garner support for it, as well as to commend the significant and effective work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Human trafficking is a serious crime against humanity and one of the most flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Every nation in the world is affected by trafficking, whether it is a country of origin, transit or destination for victims, and the most vulnerable are those that are undergoing economic or political transitions. Despite the fact that so much effort has been expended on this problem, human trafficking persists, and serious challenges remain. The reason for this situation lies primarily in the fact that trafficking in persons is a type of crime, often organized, that enables the perpetrators to reap enormous illegal benefits and, through that, power and influence in society.

Other reasons for such crimes are high levels of unemployment and poverty and a lack of opportunity for younger generations, along with a grave socioeconomic situation in general. Confronted with such difficulties, the people in this kind of environment are attempting to make a living when they are recruited by traffickers. Recruitment methods are numerous; the most common is deceiving victims with false promises of a better life, employment and economic independencend. And there are worse methods, which include crude psychological and physical abuse, blackmail and threats.

We stress Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to fighting human trafficking. It is still not fully under control, however. We have been actively implementing our State action plan for combating human trafficking, with activities that include strengthening the support framework, capacity-building for the relevant institutions and organizations, preventing trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting the perpetrators of offences, strengthening partnerships between the Government and non-government sectors, and improving international cooperation.

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also prepared a new strategy and action plan for combating trafficking in persons for the period 2013-2015, based on analysis of the implementation and achievements of the previous plan. While the strategy and action plan were being developed, we collected the opinions of numerous relevant institutions and of non-governmental and international organizations dealing with human trafficking, and a public discussion was held. The European Commission provided expert assistance in order to bring the documents in line with European Union standards. After identifying deficiencies during the earlier period in Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislation with regard to criminal offences connected with trafficking in human beings, authorities made additional efforts towards proposing a possible solution through amendments to the criminal code, to bring it into line with regional legislation as well as international standards.

Our Ministry of Security has signed a protocol with two non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and accommodation to foreign victims of human trafficking, while the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has signed a protocol with three non-governmental organizations that provide support and accommodation for domestic victims. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a few shelters and safe houses that primarily take care of women and children victims of domestic violence and, if necessary, provide shelter to victims of trafficking and prostitution. There are also special projects aimed at removing the causes of trafficking and supporting prevention programmes in municipalities where cases of human trafficking have occurred. Furthermore, all data on possible victims of trafficking in human beings is collected by the prosecutor's offices, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations.

There is a lot of work to be done to combat human trafficking and to protect its victims. We look forward to interactive debate during this high-level event.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, let me thank the President of the General Assembly for having organized this high-level meeting. As a member of the Friends United in the Fight against Human Trafficking, Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to the consolidation of international efforts in combating this global threat.

We believe that in recent years there has been significant progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially in the development of a legal framework, regional consultative processes and capacity-building at the national level. We highly appreciate the coordinating activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; the comprehensive approach by the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD), the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international organizations; and the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking.

We believe that, over the years, we have managed to achieve real results through interactions with the civil society sector and with the broad participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in programmes to prevent trafficking and assist victims. At the same time, we support the proposals on the need for further comprehensive measures to strengthen the fight against human trafficking and the implementation of best practices based on the situation before us.

Kyrgyzstan, in accordance with the Global Plan of Action and its international obligations, has implemented a set of measures to promote a national anti-trafficking system. In the past year, we developed a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2012 to 2015. Among other things, that document introduces a number of changes to the legislation to tighten administrative and criminal liability for crimes of human trafficking and adopts measures to increase public awareness. The action plan also aims to strengthen cooperation between different State structures of the Kyrgyz Republic, international organizations and NGOs.

One of the key areas concerns assisting victims of trafficking, including by facilitating their return to their homeland and providing legal, medical and psychological assistance. Recently, a resource centre for children was established with UNDP support to help children in difficult situations and prevent them from becoming possible victims of trafficking.

We believe that the continued growth of illegal migration and the scope of trafficking in human beings require further strengthening of regional cooperation. In that regard, it should be noted that, in December

2010, the Commonwealth of Independent States adopted a cooperation programme for combating trafficking in human beings for the period 2011 to 2013. The main objectives of that programme are to further expand and strengthen the international legal framework for cooperation; unify and harmonize national legislation in the field of combating human trafficking and providing assistance to victims; improve the interaction between the competent authorities, both international and non-governmental organizations; and carry out coordinated actions to prevent and combat organized criminal activities.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has made a significant contribution to strengthening regional cooperation. The relevant structures of the CSTO carry out annual joint preventative actions and special operations under the name "Illegal" to counter illegal migration and human trafficking.

It is important that combating human trafficking remain a priority in this year's agenda of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, under the chairmanship of Ukraine, and that an international conference is to be organized on this problem.

According to recent studies, there are more than 100 million migrant workers around the world. Due to the financial crisis and widespread unemployment, labour migration continues to increase. Against that backdrop, we believe it is crucial to step up efforts to develop coordinated actions to combat trafficking in persons connected with forced labour. It is necessary to implement foreign employment programmes aimed at managing legal labour migration between the countries of origin of migrants and their countries of destination. It is also necessary to continue organizing targeted programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of migration services, law enforcement structures and the judiciary, as well as the introduction of modern information technologies.

In conclusion, let me express the strong commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to comprehensive international cooperation in further implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): The Republic of Moldova aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77). However, I wish to add some relevant remarks in my national capacity. I will deliver an abridged version of my statement, which will be available in its entirety on the Permanent Mission website.

Trafficking in persons is a global phenomenon that recognizes no boundaries, no Governments and no rules, except its own. Most unfortunately, it is a grave violation of the human rights and dignity of the people and countries affected. It is a phenomenon that affects us all.

Concerted efforts are necessary due to its global nature, as mentioned by many speakers today. Every nation can contribute to the eradication of this phenomenon. Every experience matters. That is why we are here: to learn from each other. However, we are also here to find joint ways to deal with trafficking.

Our national experience has shown that, through political will and partnerships, we can make progress, and more can be done in the future. Over recent years, therefore, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova have rebuilt our anti-trafficking system on the basis of the "four Ps" paradigm: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

The Republic of Moldova recognizes that, in order to achieve good results, we need to have a systemic approach, from a legal perspective to justice-sector efforts. With the support of international partners — in our case, the International Organization for Migration and its mission in Moldova — our existing legislative and police frameworks on preventing and fighting against trafficking have been aligned with both European and international standards.

In the light of the emerging new trends in trafficking in human beings mentioned in the 2012 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report, which indicate an increased focus on children, the Moldovan Government ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. We also amended our criminal law to criminalize offences under the Convention.

Moving from the legal framework to the activities performed by the Government, our authorities are implementing a national plan of action for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the period 2012-2013. The plan encompasses 102 concrete actions to be taken by the Republic of Moldova, as a result of the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the observations of the United States Department of State report on trafficking in persons, the universal periodic

review and the priorities of the European Union strategy for the eradication of trafficking in human beings for the period 2012 to 2016. In 2012, Moldovan authorities organized more than 100 training events and workshops for more than 1,800 experts involved in anti-trafficking efforts. Every law enforcement body in the Republic of Moldova has created a separate anti-trafficking unit within its ranks, in what could perhaps be an interesting example for other Member States.

In terms of practical penal measures, on the basis of existing information related to trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, the Moldovan licensing agency has issued nine decisions to withdraw, and 13 decisions to suspend, the licenses of companies dealing with the employment of citizens abroad. During 2012, 24 inquiry committees of law enforcement bodies were also created; 11 focused on detecting trafficking in human beings, one on child trafficking and 10 on illegal migration. All have initiated criminal cases. The Republic of Moldova received follow-up from these commissions from eight States with whom we cooperate, covering 15 of the criminal cases started. We also received 31 letters addressed to Moldovan courts, initiated by our partner States, on issues pertaining to trafficking in human beings. Twenty-six responses have been finalized and five are in progress.

To help affected people recover and rebuild their lives, we have strengthened protection by setting up a national referral system for victims and potential victims of human trafficking. That system has been in place since 2006 as a mechanism operating throughout the country through joint teams made up of Government and civil society entities.

We have also instituted a data-harmonization mechanism to provide cross-referencing on trafficking in human beings across all governmental bodies.

As a consequence of that systemic approach to trafficking in persons, the Republic of Moldova moved from tier 3 to tier 2 in the list of countries affected by trafficking, according to the 2012 report on trafficking in persons prepared by the United States Department of State.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my intervention, national efforts alone are not enough to fight this problem, and more needs to be done in close cooperation with our partners, as this is a global phenomena affecting all of us. Addressing its root causes is impossible without information-sharing, bilateral country agreements — of which I have already given an example — and the implementation of proactive and inclusive projects focused on countries of destination and transit, and in particular countries of origin, most of which are developing countries. Such cooperation is necessary to enhance national anti-trafficking capacities, reduce international criminality in migration and trafficking and create fair conditions for the secure and legal movement of people while also respecting their right to non-discriminatory migration.

To conclude, let me once again emphasize the full and continuous commitment of the Republic of Moldova to supporting and encouraging further efforts to address this phenomenon at the international level, as well as to express our expectation that, with United Nations support, the work of this high-level meeting will lead to practical measures in all interested countries, including the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): First of all, I would like to extend our appreciation for the hard work carried out in the organization of this very important meeting. I would especially thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their hard and tireless efforts.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery and a crime against humanity. Is is also the third most lucrative form of organized crime, after drugs and the arms trade.

Cooperation and coordination among Member States, United Nations institutions, the relevant international and regional bodies and non-State actors — such as civil society, the private sector and the media — by sharing experiences, identifying best practices and reflecting on mistakes and lessons learned, are essential to combatting human trafficking. From that perspective, this high-level meeting on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is both important and timely. We believe that the exchange of ideas and views in this meeting will produce fruitful results that will guide prevention efforts in the years to come.

The geographical position of Turkey between Europe and Asia makes it a target country for human trafficking. Over the past few decades, we have stepped up our determined fight against human trafficking under the framework of the parameters defined in the Global Plan of Action and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol: prevention, protection, prosecution and

cooperation. Important progress has been achieved in identifying victims of human trafficking, providing direct support to them victims, ensuring their voluntary and safe repatriation, raising awareness and increasing standards of protection.

Combatting human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach. In that respect, our national task force to combat human trafficking was established in 2002, under the leadership of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The task force is a coordinating body that brings together representatives of the security sector, public sector organizations, civil society and representatives of national branches of the relevant international organizations. National action plans have been in force since 2003. The ninth development plan, covering the years 2007 to 2013, also stresses the fight against human trafficking. The Turkish Ministry of the Interior is cooperating with the relevant public sector organizations, non-State actors and civil society to formulate new legislation to address the remaining problems and deal with new challenges.

On the social and humanitarian side, support centres have been established since 2004 in major cities to extend legal, psychological and medical services to victims of human trafficking. We have stepped up our cooperation with the International Labour Organization to ensure voluntary and safe repatriation. Internet, telephone and mobile telecommunication technologies are being employed on a 24-hour basis to provide constant support to victims. In addition, nationwide awareness programmess have been launched since 2008, in order to draw public attention to the gravity of the issue.

Human trafficking is a transborder issue, which requires international and regional cooperation. With that perspective in mind, Turkey has become part of all major international conventions and has reviewed its national legislation to ensure full compliance. As one of the objectives of the Global Plan of Action, the Turkish criminal code has been amended to include human trafficking as a specific category of crime, and strict penalties for offenders have been introduced.

We support and actively contribute to efforts undertaken within the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Regional Cooperation Council. We attach particular importance to our cooperation with the European Union as part of our accession process. We have signed bilateral cooperation agreements with many of our regional partners and included human trafficking clauses in the security cooperation agreements signed with over 40 countries.

Much remains to be done to put an end to the security and financial threats and human costs caused by human trafficking. We must employ sustained efforts and constant vigilance to that end. Today's high-level meeting is a sign of our willingness and determination in that respect.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for the opportunity to address this meeting and to exchange information on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the progress achieved, as well as to exchange experiences and best practices in the suppression of trafficking in human beings on the global level, including in the Republic of Croatia.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77), which the Assembly heard yesterday. In that regard, I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia strongly supports and has actively participated in all international efforts to develop multilateral approaches to combat transnational organized crime, including one of its worst forms — trafficking in human beings.

The ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol and Smuggling of Migrants Protocol in 2002 was one of the first key activities of Croatia in this field. We believe that those documents initiated the modern fight against this evil. It should be noted that Croatia was among the first countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which I believe will contribute further to effective protection of the human rights of victims.

Since then, numerous activities have been carried out in our national system that demonstrate the effective implementation of those Conventions and principles to combat trafficking in human beings, with a special commitment to addressing this complex matter in a comprehensive way. Let me emphasize that Croatia has established a human rights-based and victim-

centred approach in combating trafficking in human beings, which is illustrated by the fact that victims are given temporary residency permits regardless of their participation in court proceedings and the fact that in Croatia no victim is deported; there is only voluntary repatriation of victims.

Croatia has recognized the importance of the multi-agency approach and has established a functioning national referral mechanism through a protocol on identification, help and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings. That mechanism strengthens cooperation and coordination among law enforcement, medical institutions, social workers, immigration and border service, and non-governmental organizations.

The office of the national coordinator continues to make efforts to improve the established system and legislative framework. In the most recent amendments to the criminal code defining trafficking in human beings, we have also included the illegal adoption of children as a form of trafficking in human beings.

The new national plan for suppression of trafficking in human beings covers the period from 2012 until 2015. Special attention is given to the suppression of labour and sexual exploitation; strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and States' prosecutor's offices; research on the correlation between forced prostitution and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as the correlation between forced labour and trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation; and public awareness campaigns and the education of target groups.

Furthermore, Croatia pays special attention to international and regional cooperation. It must also be emphasized that regional activities are very important, because it is only through collaboration with the authorities from neighbouring countries, which usually comprise the same human trafficking chain, that this problem can be suppressed successfully and efficiently.

Trafficking in human beings represents a gross violation of human rights. In that regard, we welcome this high-level meeting and look forward to substantial and fruitful debates, which should provide renewed impetus in fighting human trafficking.

Let me conclude by stating the commitment of the Republic of Croatia to the goals and objectives of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the President for organizing this important meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other speakers for their important contributions on the subject of combating trafficking in persons.

The United Nations articulated a clear vision on this subject by launching the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in August 2010. The Plan mandated the international community to address the problem of human trafficking in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It must be implemented through integrated, balanced, coherent, results-oriented and people-centric policies.

The "four Ps" — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — are a new clarion call in this fight, which needs to be adhered to and implemented. The new element of partnership is crucial. It recognizes effective partnerships with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector as an integral part of this fight.

The 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, issued by the UNODC, is the first such attempt to present a global overview of trends and challenges in trafficking in persons. Notwithstanding the information gaps that still persist, the findings of the report are a grim reminder of the growing global scale of trafficking in persons and of the complexities involved in dealing with this issue. According to the report, women and children remain particularly vulnerable to trafficking, especially with respect to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.

While more than 130 countries have criminalized trafficking, progress in conviction remains limited. These findings underline the basic fact that while national efforts to eliminate trafficking are essential, it is also critical to have greater cohesion in the international community's efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish those involved in trafficking in persons, especially through organized crime. Capacity-building, as the report notes, is a significant challenge to be addressed.

India is firmly committed to a world free of human trafficking. We live in one of the most densely populated

regions of the world. India ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in May, 2011. Our commitment is reflected in various national laws and policies. At the level of policy implementation, we have developed strategies that are holistic, participative and inclusive and that are not restricted to direct intervention against trafficking alone. We are adopting a victim-centric approach to the issues.

Anti-trafficking nodal cells have been set up both at the central and provincial levels. We are working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to strengthen law enforcement responses to trafficking in persons in India. A comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation is already in place. India also seeks to eradicate trafficking by empowering the vulnerable sections of our society who are its potential victims. That is also one of the core objectives of the Global Plan of Action.

The international community, including the United Nations, must contribute and help States seeking financial and technical assistance to build capacity and put in place administrative and legal frameworks — institutional reforms that are imperative if we are to combat the challenge. The UNODC has an important role to play in enhancing training and capacity-building to strengthen law enforcement responses.

We are concerned that, despite greater international cooperation, the growing global trend of trafficking in persons has not been eradicated. We need to redouble our efforts in fighting that scourge. India stands ready to work with the international community in that regard.

Mr. Kogda (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting and fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Many countries around the world, like Burkina Faso have enacted laws and acceded to international legal instruments to completely abolish trafficking in human beings. But we must note that millions of people continue to be victims of that practice. Statistics bear out that assertion by showing that there are 2.5 million victims of trafficking in persons, of which only 1 per cent were saved from it in 2012. The vile practice from another era is part of the disintegration of human values, the deterioration of social morals and a worsening of poverty, an increase in mercenary spirit and the intensification of conflicts. Unfortunately, most often, women and children are the most exposed to the scourge, which reduces them to the status of merchandise bought and sold for commercial, sexual or labour exploitation. Of greater concern is the fact that children are increasingly used in trafficking as bait in criminal and terrorist acts or as cannon fodder in armed conflicts.

That is why this high-level meeting is an auspicious opportunity for the international community, especially for the United Nations, to assess the efforts undertaken to combat trafficking in human beings and, in particular, to evaluate the implementation of the Global Plan of Action adopted in 2010 to that end.

In Burkina Faso, since 1999, the Government has been resolutely committed to combating trafficking in human beings at many levels. Domestically, in 2002, the Government ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and has taken preventive measures and steps to protect victims by creating a national monitoring committee against trafficking in persons and associated practices; adopting a law in 2008 designed to combat trafficking in persons and associated practices and leading to penalties against those guilt of trafficking; awareness-raising and training of State and non-State actors and opinion leaders on the harmful effects of child exodus; establishing a legal aid fund for victims to again access to courts without having to pay court costs; and adopting a procedure for the repatriation of women and children who have been victims of trafficking, under conditions that serve to fully protect their rights.

At the international level, Burkina Faso participates in the International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour Programme on Combating Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa. In addition, in the context of European Union-African Union partnership, Burkina Faso oversaw the negotiations and drafting of the Ouagadougou Action Plan against the Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which was adopted in Tripoli in November 2006.

We must increase our efforts and political will at all levels to eradicate the arcane practice of trafficking in persons. It is imperative in terms of promoting and protecting human rights. Whether it be the international community, States, international and regional organizations or other stakeholders in civil society, all must play their part.

Many national laws have been adopted, several bilateral and regional agreements have been signed, many international legal instruments have been ratified — all of them need only to be implemented. Let us respect all the commitments undertaken in the fight against trafficking in human beings. It is certainly within our reach.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Have members ever met a victim of human trafficking? Well, I did, when I was working for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, back 1999. Her name was Marinela; she was 17 and terrified. Trafficked from Romania, she had been coerced into prostitution by a pimp who beat her with numbing regularity. She had been constantly raped and tortured in the sordid, violent and horrific labyrinths of her ordeal. Since then, I must confess, whenever I speak at events like this one, I have been haunted by her sad eyes.

We all know by now that trafficking in persons is one of the worst forms of human rights abuse and one most brutal crimes. It is a multidimensional phenomenon affecting both adults and children, and almost no country in the world today is safe from it. Like all the countries in the European Union, especially those in Eastern Europe, my country is strongly committed to preventing and fighting human trafficking. We believe that combating trafficking is much more than a national duty. The right response, as we have all been saying during the past few days, is a coherent approach at the international level that involves all Governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Let me share with the General Assembly, as expeditiously as I can, a few key points from Romania's perspective.

First of all, the coherent and universal implementation of the relevant international legal instruments is a starting point in our duty, as trafficking in persons has transnational implications. Our common language in the matter is provided by such current international legal instruments as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress And Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which give us the legal basis for the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Promoting the universality of the Protocol is one of the main objectives of the Global Plan of Action we have been debating during the past couple of days. In that respect, allow me to join the appeal made in the statement of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77) and urge all States to ratify the Palermo Convention and its Protocol without delay, as well as to coordinate efforts to implement it fully. Romania did just that in 2002, and we now have in force a full range of domestic legal instruments that complement each other with specific strategic policies.

Secondly, enhancing collective efforts for the prevention of human trafficking is more necessary than ever. Awareness campaigns targeting the main risk groups are the essential preventive tool, and we have undertaken many in Romania. Organizations with domestic and international coverage play a crucial role in such campaigns, and they should be permanent partners. However, in addition to the general public, service providers that may have contact with victims, such as notaries public and transportation and tourism companies, should also be involved.

Thirdly, developing an international mechanism for victim referral is of the utmost importance for increasing the level of victim protection and assistance. Our national authority has developed and promoted a transnational referral mechanism for victims of trafficking based on the implementation of our national mechanism for victim identification and referral, with concrete international cooperation with main destiantion countries. We constantly bear in mind the fact that assisting victims means addressing their needs on a case-by-case basis in the short, medium and long term.

Fourthly, more effective prosecution, aimed at bringing perpetrators to justice, is possible through inter-agency and transnational cooperation. I am pleased to say that a positive trend in criminal investigations for human trafficking in Romania is evident in an increase in the number of convictions. In 2012, for example, the number of convicted traffickers was 55 per cent higher than in the preceding year, and double that of 2010. In 2012, Romanian authorities also concluded a domestic inter-agency coordination protocol aimed

at implementing a project for expanding on the good practices acquired in recent years and increasing the efficiency of the prosecution process.

Partnerships are essential to increasing institutioanal capacity. That is why the Romanian agency working to combat trafficking in persons is currently engaged in several international partnership projects both as a provider of assistance and as a beneficiary of it, most of which have multiple partner countries in Western and Eastern Europe and a regional cooperation approach.

I would like to emphasize the essential role of civil society in the difficult process of eradicating human trafficking. Neither prevention of the crime nor assistance to victims is possible without their involvement and activism. I would like to join others in encouraging a participatory approach to civil society at all levels, and in commending non-governmental organizations for their passion, hard work and dedication.

Finally, I would like to discuss one challenge that will require special attention and resources in the near future —improving data collection and analysis. In our view, having a scientific basis for evaluating and analysing the relevant public policies is essential to effectively preventing and combating human trafficking. This is in line with the recommendations of the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We would like, by the way, to commend UNODC for all its efforts to combat this horrendous crime, and also to thank the Ambassadors of Aus.ria and Cape Verde for their facilitating the organization of this very timely meeting.

Sixty-five years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In doing so, Member States essentially proclaimed that all human beings were born free; that no one should be held in slavery or servitude; and that slavery and the slave trade were prohibited in all their forms. It also proclaimed that all human beings should live in dignity and be safe from harm and fear. Today, however, millions of people, most of them children and women, along with other vulnerable groups, are victims of modern-day slavery.

Romania, like every other member of the European Union, remains firmly committed to the global effort to combat this scourge. The keys are, of course, the four words that almost every speaker has mentioned today — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. This is not just about politics or demagogic promises. The fight against human trafficking goes deeper than that, into our collective sense of humanity, our collective responsibility for protecting the fundamental and inalienable right of all human beings to enjoy their lives in freedom, dignity and security. That is a responsibility to be upheld by all of us, no matter where or who we are, regardless of race, creed or walk of life. In this there should be no lines to separate us. It is therefore up to all of us to take firm action to turn our societies and communities into places that are less conducive to such dreadful crimes as human trafficking. We should all try hard to give Marinela and her peers their smiles and their lives back.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.80

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

80th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 15 May 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 33 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/67/L.63)

The President: Members will recall that, under agenda item 33, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/259 at its seventy-fourth plenary meeting, held on 26 April.

We gather in the Great Hall of the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, home to a proud and valiant people engulfed in an escalating maelstrom of ferocious violence. A multi-confessional and multi-ethnic country in the heart of the Middle-East, Syria is inhabited by Sunni, Shia, Alawite and Christian Arabs, together with Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Druze, Armenians, Mizrahi Jews, and other communities. It stands at one of the world's most important civilizational crossroads, continuously enriching the heritage of humanitarianumankind for millenniums.

Bordered by the Mediterranean basin and the Holy Land to the west, Anatolia to the north, Mesopotamia to the east, and the Arabian Desert to the south, Syria is a place of beautiful mosques erected during the Golden Age of Islam, and home to magnificent churches housing some of the most venerated icons and relics of the Christian faith. Its capital Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited metropolises of the world. The Jasmine City stood at the centre of the mighty Umayyad and Fatimid empires, serving as the starting point of the major caravan route for pilgrims making the hajj. It is where the Apostle Paul experienced his miraculous conversion, and Saladin began his ride to Jerusalem.

For centuries, equal to Damascus in its splendor was Syria's largest city Aleppo. As a terminus of the Silk Road, it basked in its greatest glory under the rule of Sayf Al-Dawla, whose royal court attracted renowned philosophers and poets such as Al-Farabi and Al-Mutanabbi.

Yet today, the vitality and grandeur are all but gone. The calls of muezzin and the ringing of church bells have been drowned out by the sound and fury of falling shells, exploding mortar rounds and machine gun fire. Towns and villages have been razed to the ground and the fertile countryside now lies fallow.

At least 80,000 have perished since the start of the hostilities, with most of these casualties believed to be civilians. As the death toll rises with every passing hour, so does the number of refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered close to 1.5 million of them, who now live in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and beyond. Over 4 million more have been internally displaced since the fighting began, according to some estimates.

Evidence of chemical weapons use is coming to light. Violence is begetting more violence, hatred more hatred, carving ever deeper wounds into Syria's society.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Over the past 800 days, the conflict has continued to escalate, threatening the establishment of ethnic or sectarian fiefdoms, thereby gravely imperiling the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. The threat of full-scale lawlessness looms large, portending to engulf the country in wanton destruction.

We should have no doubt that what happens in Syria in the weeks and months ahead will profoundly bear upon the security and well-being of the entire region, and possibly beyond. We must not allow the shadows to lengthen and mayhem to spread like a contagion. Succumbing to the despondency of the status quo is a prescription for a disastrous future of growing estrangement, multiplying crises and uncontrollable revendications.

We gather today in the General Assembly to express the conscience of the international community, but our efforts must be put to the service of endeavours to bring about the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and induce the conflicting parties to engage in dialogue. This, however, must not be confused with the hard work that must follow in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace in Syria.

We should strive to build on the agreement, reached by the Action Group for Syria last June in Geneva and reinvigorated a few days ago in Moscow, to get the political process off the ground, enabling the citizens of Syria to begin reconciliation and ultimately to freely determine their nation's future. I believe that it is incumbent on the international community to extend its full support to this course of action, in which all of us should play active and appropriate roles, investing our greatest efforts in the quest to bring this disaster to an end.

In my view, this is a grave test for the United Nations, an institution founded with the express intent of being a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. Should we fail to stop the perpetuation of what is fast becoming the most horrific humanitarian catastrophe of our times, then common decency will demand of us to ask, in all candour, "quo vadis, United Nations?"

I believe that the tides of history are not indifferent to the cause of justice. If we are unable to do anything to stop this tragedy, then how can we sustain the moral credibility of the Organization? I believe that it is high time to say "enough is enough — enough to complacency, and enough to fratricide.

I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.63.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are all well aware of the tragedies occurring on a daily basis in the Syrian Arab Republic, the deterioration of the situation in the country, the repercussions for the security of the country, the well-being of its people and international peace and security, and the severe tragedy resulting from the crisis. We cannot help but wonder if the United Nations, faced with the continued escalation in the use of heavy weapons and ballistic missiles by the Syrian authorities against population centres, should not condemn those acts in the strongest terms? Should not the United Nations, in view of the escalation of violence, condemn those acts, regardless of their source? Should not the United Nations, in the light of the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and fundamental freedoms, condemn those transgressions, irrespective of their perpetrators, and call for an immediate end to them?

That is the premise on which the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 proceeded. On that basis, approximately one third of the Member States, on whose behalf I speak today, prepared a draft resolution modelled on what has been adopted by the General Assembly before in this respect. They drew up a draft resolution that is rooted in international law and the Charter of the United Nations; it imposes no obligation on Member States, but merely reflects the position of the majority, using agreed language.

While we emphasize that there is no way to place the victimizer and the victim on even footing, objectivity is nonetheless required. The draft resolution is therefore objective, balanced and fair, as demonstrated by many of is provisions, including a condemnation of transgressions and violations and an attempt to address all countries on an equal footing, in more than one place in the text.

In previous relevant resolutions, the General Assembly has called for a political solution and a comprehensive political transition process led by Syria towards a democratic, pluralistic political system. It has called in particular for serious dialogue between the Syrian authorities and all factions of the opposition. It has also welcomed the conference held under the auspices of the League of Arab States last month.

Now that the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces has been

established as the wide umbrella under which all factions will be united, we have an interlocutor, which is a necessary step for the political transition. Why would the General Assembly not welcome this? Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations emphasizes the role of regional arrangements in international peace and security, as emphasized by the draft resolution. Should not the Organization play a complementary role and welcome the League of Arab States as the relevant authority in the search for a political solution for the crisis in Syria? This is just the essence of the draft resolution concerning the political solution of the crisis.

A diligent reading of the text makes it clear that the draft resolution supports all efforts to find a solution that will put an end to the bloodshed and ensure the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex), including all political, regional and international efforts. The draft resolution addresses all aspects of the Syrian crisis, calls for the implementation of the humanitarian assistance plan in order to give assistance and access to all those working in the humanitarian and medical fields, and urges the concerned authorities to provide the necessary financial support. It addresses the question of refugees and internally displaced persons, taking into account the concerns of the host countries, highlights the political role of the United Nations, and condemns attacks against United Nations staff. It also deals with the issue of accountability, calls for an end to all violations, encourages the Security Council to take action in this respect and highlights the role of the Syrian people in achieving reconciliation.

It stresses one particular aspect of the crisis, namely, the report referring to the use of chemical weapons, and supports the efforts of the United Nations to investigate this question without coming to any unconfirmed conclusions. The draft resolution highlights the positive role of the United Nations and supports its efforts to offer humanitarian assistance and the activities of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria.

Despite the urgent nature of the crisis, the authors of the draft resolution took care to take the views of many countries into consideration and held consultations with a sincere desire to reach an acceptable text. The draft resolution has been revised many times, and many of us have intervened to respond to all concerns. Member States have before them a draft resolution that is based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of non-interference in a country's internal affairs. It also calls for the non-use of force or threat of force, and therefore is not a call or excuse for military intervention. It calls for the provision of every kind of support to the Syrian people.

The duties of the United Nations include supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people to justice, stability and equality and insisting on their protection. The lack of concern for what is happening in Syria is unacceptable, not only for ethical reasons, but also for reasons related to international peace and security. Therefore, we call on Member States to support this endeavour and vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me say that I listened closely to the statement just delivered by my friend Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly. It offered a very careful and detailed analysis of the events in our country and region, and a careful interpretation of the situation that predicts what might happen in coming days if certain forces were to insist on rejecting a political solution and to gamble with the destiny of the region and the fate of our nations. I also wish to welcome my dear friend, Mr. Jan Eliasson.

It is surprising that draft resolution A/67/L.63 under consideration has been submitted under agenda item 33, "Prevention of armed conflict", as the content of the draft totally contradicts the wording and purpose of that noble agenda item. The draft resolution seeks to escalate the crisis and fuel violence in Syria by setting a dangerous precedent in international relations in its attempt to legitimize the provision of weapons to terrorist groups in Syria and to illegally recognize a certain faction of the external opposition as "the legitimate representative of the Syrian people", despite the fact that this faction, which is already internally divided and lacks a leader, does not even represent the full spectrum of the opposition inside or outside Syria.

Yet those who prepared the draft resolution considered it appropriate to speak in the name and on behalf of the all Syrian citizens inside and outside the country and to dictate to the international community that the legitimate representative of the Syrian people should be a minute faction of the external opposition that was born, raised and nourished by the media in Doha, Qatar. At the political level, it is the creature of other capitals inside and outside the region.

It is worth noting that whenever there are indications of a political solution to the crisis in Syria, the pace and

magnitude of terrorist attacks on the ground increase and some Member States intensify their efforts to abort that political approach. It is as if those States are sending the message that a peaceful political solution based on dialogue is not allowed in Syria. The draft resolution is the best example of such an approach and is effectively swimming against the current, especially in light of the latest Russian-American rapprochement, which the Syrian Government has officially welcomed.

Hundreds of terrorist attacks, including suicide attacks, have claimed the lives of a great number of innocent civilian victims. Well-known terrorist groups active in Syria publicly declare their allegiance to Al-Qaida, a group that we all oppose. But it would appear that some people combat Al-Qaida in theory and name only while others actually combat it in deed. There are some who secretly and publicly support Al-Qaida.

Thousands of extremist foreign terrorists and mercenaries are being brought to Syria, with the involvement of other States' intelligence agencies, in response to the calls of the leader of Al-Qaida and others to destroy the Syrian State and establish instead a "jihadist Islamic caliphate", according to the leaders of Al-Qaida. Arms smuggling operations, which have been publicized and duly documented by the United Nations, are bringing in all sorts of weapons from Libya and elsewhere into Syria. Those are all well-documented facts. Unprecedented savage crimes and documented human rights violations are being committed by armed terrorist groups in Syria. Illegitimate, unilateral and coercive economic, commercial and financial measures are aggravating the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people. Organized assassinations and kidnappings of Islamic and Christian clerics are being perpetrated. The oldest Jewish synagogue in the region, located in the suburbs of Damascus, was destroyed and its contents were sold in the markets of Beirut and elsewhere by the merchants of death and suffering.

The organized and systematic acts of sacrilege, the desecration of holy shrines and sites, and the savage attacks against archaeological sites and famous intellectual figures bring to mind the demolition of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan and similar barbarous actions that have taken place in Tunisia, Libya, Mali and occupied Palestine.

That is just the tip of the iceberg of what is happening in my country, Syria. It has been acknowledged by officials of Member States that are co-sponsoring draft resolution A/67/L.63. However, it would seem that the hands of the drafters were disabled when it came to condemning the aforementioned actions and highlighting their grave and perilous implications for Syria and its people. The draft resolution does not contain a single use of the word "terrorism".

It may be suggested that a demand that the drafters mention or, better yet, condemn those terrorist activities in their draft could not be met in the normal order of things because, in so doing, some of them would be condemning themselves, given that they are deeply implicated in activities that surpass in criminality the crime of terrorism itself.

It is very clear that the illegal seating of the so-called National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in the seat of the Syrian Arab Republic at the League of Arab States, and the drafters' attempt to get the General Assembly involved in granting the Coalition false status as representative the Syrian people merely seek to undermine the Syrian State and its institutions as a whole and to block any chance of a peaceful solution to the crisis, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and the Geneva Communiqué. Furthermore, the methods used constitute a flagrant violation of the rules of international law and the Charters of both the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The so-called National Coalition for Syria, which was created in Doha, Qatar, theoretically includes 63 members, but in practice has only 53. That is the case because those who invited the extremist opposition coalition, which rejects dialogue and exists only in Doha, left 10 seats to be filled by secularists from within Syrian opposition groups. Although nearly a year has passed since then, the Qataris and their allies have yet to find 10 secularist Syrian opposition members who are willing to join a coalition that is under the control and domination of extremist religious factions.

Is it not odd that some Member States that claim to be working to bring democracy and freedom to Syria and to enable its people to determine their own future are the same States that have usurped the right of the Syrian people to choose their own representatives and leadership? Those States are trying to ensure, supposedly on behalf of the Syrian people, that a certain group created artificially in Doha is the sole representative of the Syrian people. It would seem that those same

States are introducing their own amendments to the concept of democracy, whereby true democracy is based on the right of certain foreign countries to choose the representatives and leadership of another country without any involvement of the people of that country itself. That is the reading of and the vision held by some of the drafters of draft resolution A/67/L.63.

We have repeatedly called attention to the destructive role of the League of Arab States, led particularly by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, together with that new member of the League of Arab States, Turkey. They are playing a destructive role with respect to the Syrian crisis, starting with manipulating the Arab observer mission in Syria and continuing with the latest decision to allow members of the League of Arab States to arm terrorist groups in Syria, which is tantamount to supporting and financing terrorism, according to relevant international legal standards. Those decisions not only contradict the role of regional organizations as stated in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, but will, if implemented, direct a deadly blow to the chances of finding a political settlement to the current crisis.

That is precisely what some sponsors of the draft resolution hope to achieve. They do not want a solution to the Syrian crisis; they want regime change at any cost. They call it a game. They call it changing the rules of the game. The suffering of the people of Syria, the stability of Syria, the fate of Syria — all of that is, to them, a mere game. I quote a statement made recently by Mr. Brahimi, Joint Special Envoy, in his most recent briefing to the Security Council, on 19 April, recalling the decision of the League of Arab States dated 6 March 2013, which was adopted in Doha.

(*spoke in English*)

> "If the language of that resolution is to be taken literally, that means that for the League of Arab States the Geneva process is to be considered obsolete. No dialogue or negotiations are possible or necessary."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

If the Joint Special Envoy were to say the same with respect to the draft resolution before us, what could we add? While the corruption fueled by Qatari and Saudi petrodollars has destroyed the credibility of the League of Arab States, undermined the integrity of its Secretary General's position, and damaged Mr. Brahimi's mission, the States Members of the United Nations must not allow our Organization to be infected with the notorious corruption of the Qatari and Turkish regimes, which support religious extremists yet are nominally responsible for the Dialogue of Civilizations, or that of the Saudi regime, which recruits terrorists, or as they call them, "jihadists", while supporting the counter-terrorism work of the centre they created at the United Nations and financed with $10 million they donated in advance.

The Syrian Government has welcomed all initiatives seeking a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Syria. I would like to announce from this rostrum once again that the Syrian Government is completely serious and sincere in wishing to achieve a comprehensive, Syrian-led national dialogue encompassing all components of Syrian society and political forces, including all national internal and external opposition groups and the militants who are ready to lay down their arms for the benefit of a peaceful solution and to resort to common sense and logic. There are genuine judicial and security guarantees to secure the safe return of the external opposition forces, including the so-called Opposition Coalition, if they are willing to participate in the national dialogue and the political process.

The great majority of the Syrian people reject violence and chaos and support a prompt, peaceful political solution to the crisis that preserves their right to life, security, stability, citizenship and justice, while maintaining their country's capabilities and securing a future for their children untouched by extremism and terrorism. Those Syrian opposition factions claiming to genuinely have Syria's best interests at heart and to want to end Syrian bloodshed, but who reject dialogue, are therefore requested to set aside their personal grudges, reject any efforts to implement foreign agendas and engage in a national dialogue.

I appeal to all Syrians to beware the aim of some of the foreign capitals that are involved in the bloodshed in Syria, which is to perpetuate the crisis in Syria so as to drain the country's capacities and achieve the total destruction of its infrastructure and social fabric. If that happens, the only losers will be Syria and the Syrians, and the only winners will be those who wish the country harm and misfortune. A quick review of ancient and recent history, whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or other countries, will soon make it clear that what is fundamentally at issue has nothing to do with human rights, the humanitarian situation,

spreading democracy or the best interests of the people of any one country. We are all agreed on that. What is at issue, and what is the real goal, are political, military and economic interests that lead only to insecurity, destruction, crime, disintegration, sectarianism, poverty and other problems that need decades to solve.

I would like to emphasize to all that at the end of the day the real solution to the Syrian crisis can only be an exclusively Syrian solution, led by Syrians themselves.

In view of everything I have discussed, my delegation asks that the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 be put to a vote, and we urge all Member States to vote against it.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to an important piece of information that illustrates the depth of corruption prevailing in some offices of this international Organization. An e-mail message that reached several high officials of the United Nations originated in Doha, sent by the so-called Ambassador of the coalition in Qatar. That so-called Ambassador is the one who instructed the terrorists known as the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade to kidnap Philippine nationals serving in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Ambassador of the coalition in Doha, who was given the Syrian Embassy in Doha by the Qatari authorities, supervised the negotiations with the kidnappers who captured Filipino members of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Golan. He did this twice. The first time, 21 observers were kidnapped and taken to Jordan, where pictures were taken of them for the record; they were given tea, refreshments and food before being released and returned through the area of separation back into Syrian territory; the second time was a few days ago, when four Filipino members of the United Nations troops were kidnapped.

This is the e-mail, right here, with a telephone number used to issue instructions from Doha: 009745577546. This e-mail is now available in many offices of the Secretariat, but nobody has mentioned it. No one has said anything about it, even though this matter concerns the safety of UNDOF observers in Golan. I do not wish to say much more about this subject, which is self-explanatory.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Over the past two years, the General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions — most recently, resolution 67/183 of 20 December 2012 — concerning the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. What has happened since then? First, the number of victims has risen to more than 80,000 dead. The Government forces have intensified the ferocity of their assault on the Syrian people and diversified their methods of killing, including, in addition to tanks and heavy artillery, shelling by missiles and planes and the use of chemical weapons against civilians. That is in addition to the torching and destruction that the regime has visited on many Syrian villages and cities. Massacres, collective murder and sectarian discrimination have increased. Before, we counted the number of massacres by the names of the cities and villages where they occurred; now such things are happening so frequently that we can no longer count them. They have left their traces in every city and village.

The number of refugees and displaced persons has grown to millions, recalling the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Today their numbers are a heavy burden on neighbouring countries.The regime and its supporters have continued to commit crimes against humanity on civilians, sexual crimes such as rape, and ethnic cleansing and torture, all carried out in unimaginable ways.

The effects of the crisis have spilled across borders and now threaten peace and security across the entire Middle East. The prospects for a peaceful solution have been diminished by the intransigence of the regime and its refusal to respect the will of its people and the opinion of the international community. This led to the withdrawal of the first United Nations-Arab League Joint Envoy and has threatened the mission of the second. Both declared that responsibility for the murder and violence lies primarily with the regime. Mr. Brahimi has said that he sees no role for the Syrian leadership in any transitional phase or in a future Syria.

Draft resolution A/67/L.63, before us today, is of great importance as it sends a message from the international community to the Syrian people that neither the blood of the martyrs nor the lives of the victims have been sacrificed in vain. The extremist persecutors will not go unnoticed in history.

To the Syrian regime, the draft resolution says that a Government based on the skulls of martyrs can only fail. Leadership that turns its weapons on its own unarmed people loses its legitimacy after losing its balance.

To those countries which claim that the draft resolution is unbalanced, we suggest they say as much to the families of the victims, the displaced and the hundreds of thousands of injured. Let them explain that the draft resolution should have struck a better balance between unarmed civilians and the tanks of the regime, or that it should have been more neutral between the voices of the protestors calling for freedom and the ricochet of bullets and deafening roar of artillery.

To the national opposition in Syria, the draft resolution says that the world supports their unity and legitimate struggle.

Some might call for further chances to be given to international efforts, but justice impels us to insist that such calls and efforts should be based on the will of the Syrian people and the international community. They should be a means to start a transitional political process leading to a new Syria that treats all of its citizens justly and seeks to establish a free, pluralistic society unifying all of the Syrian people, irrespective of their political, racial, religious or sectarian affiliation.

We listened to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, seeking to paint the issue as a conflict between Syria and Qatar or Syria and Saudi Arabia. The conflict is between the ruling regime in Syria and the people of Syria, and any attempt to divert attention from that fact will fail. The truth is abundantly clear. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic sought to make the issue look like a war against terrorism in which his Government is facing terrorists. Have all the 80,000 people killed in the violence in Syria been terrorists? If the Government had killed 80,000 terrorists, terrorism would have been ended the world over.

The Assembly heard a clever attempt to divert attention from the reality of the situation. That reality is that there is a people who wishes to live, but must endure under the oppression of the military force aimed against it. We did not hear a single word from our colleague about a ceasefire. We did not hear one single word about stopping the Syrian machine of death and destruction. We did not hear one single word about the Government's willingness to move towards a genuine transition in which the interests of the people would take precedence over any other.

A vote in favour of the draft resolution is a vote for history and for freedom. Voting otherwise, whatever the intention, will only serve to encourage oppression.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Over the past, 26 months we have witnessed a brutal conflict in Syria. The Assad regime, drawing upon an arsenal of heavy weapons, aircraft, ballistic missiles and, potentially, chemical weapons, has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians who for many months manifested their opposition purely through peaceful protest. The sustained violence has created a severe humanitarian crisis, with more than 1.4 million refugees and 4.25 million internally displaced persons within Syria.

The consequences of this crisis are growing more dire not only within Syria, but across the region. The generosity of the Governments and people of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and others, which are hosting large numbers of refugees, has been extraordinary. But those countries now face grave threats to their security and an overwhelming economic burden. It is clear that we need a Syrian-led peaceful political transition.

With this in mind, the United States and the Russian Federation announced on 7 May an initiative to bring the Syrian regime and the opposition together in an effort to try to advance a political solution under the framework agreed to in Geneva in June 2012. In our view, the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/67/L.63) is consistent with that latest initiative. Adopting the draft resolution will send a clear message that the political solution we all seek is the best way to end the suffering of the people of Syria. We support the draft resolution, have co-sponsored it, and urge Member States to vote in favor of it.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): We are here to take action on one of the biggest crises affecting, directly and indirectly, the peace and security of a vast portion of the Middle East and beyond. Draft resolution A/67/L.63, submitted by Qatar and other sponsors, is very timely as the international community is seeking a way to stop the violence and devise a plan to end the crisis. Since dynamics within the Security Council prevent action by the body with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should once again assume its responsibility to reflect the common sense of the international community.

Unfortunately, the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian crisis is worsening every day before our very eyes and in an exponential manner. Even while we are negotiating this broad consensus text,

targeted operations by the Syrian regime and the Shabbiha continue unabated. An immense array of cultural heritage continues to be destroyed by aerial bombardment and ballistic missiles.

We in New York are being informed only of a minimal portion of the grave situation, whereas the great majority of the civilian population in Syria must face this grim reality every single day in order to survive. Various top United Nations officials have articulated the gravity of the situation within and around Syria over and over again. Neighbouring countries, including Turkey, have called on the responsible bodies of the United Nations to action at every opportunity. Our most recent attempt was only nine days ago, but it was to no avail.

The problem is not with the limits of the United Nations; it is with our limited perception of the realities on the ground. How long will we let our fears prevent us from acting within the United Nations? Will inaction provide the solution to those fears? The draft resolution is yet another appeal to the conscience of the international community. It is reminder to all of us that unless we change our perception, more people are going to die — not because of the oppressors in Syria, but because we could not stop them.

There are a lot of details in the draft resolution, but there is one single fact. The vote that we will cast will be perceived by the oppressors either as a warning against or active support for the regime's brutal policies. Certainly, we should be well aware of this. One may choose to believe in the allegations uttered from the rostrum. We choose to believe what we see on the ground. We have continually stated that we stand by the people of Syria, and we will continue to do so. For all these reasons, Syria supports the draft resolution.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation regrets the fact that a very harmful and destructive draft resolution on the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/67/L.63) has been submitted for adoption by the General Assembly. The authors of the draft resolution have obviously not taken a political approach to resolving the crisis and have ignored the situation in and around the country. In fact, the draft resolution seeks to impose on the United Nations one-sided attempts to trample on the tenets of international law in order to effect regime change in the Syrian Arab Republic and focus on one-sided political aims.

The fact that the so-called National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces is highlighted in the text as the only legitimate representative of the Syrian people is an attempt to prepare the ground for conferring the authority to represent Syria in the international arena on a group created under active foreign patronage. This can only be seen as an encouragement to the opposition to pursue armed struggle to replace the regime. The March decisions of the League of Arab States and their positive reception are incitements to the opposition.

At the same time, the militarization of the situation throughout the region, and above all in Syria, has not really been taken into consideration. Against the backdrop of a very complex humanitarian situation, the draft resolution represents a dangerous attempt to call into question universal and generally accepted principles on the provision of humanitarian assistance, thereby undermining the sovereignty of Syria.

Thw document, like the two similar resolutions 67/183 and 67/262 adopted in 2012, is clearly a one-sided text. The full responsibility for the tragic developments is assigned to the Syrian Government, despite the obvious facts, including those recognized by authoritative international organizations, surrounding the illegal actions of the armed opposition, including terrorist acts. Moreover, the foreign military, logistical and financial support to the opposition is completely disregarded.

The deterioration in the human rights situation in Syria is blamed entirely on the Syrian Government. This interpretation of the situation is clearly contradicted by many examples of violations by the armed opposition, including those recorded in the report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Unfortunately, we note that the proposals of a number of constructively minded Member States to amend some of these dangerous defects in the draft resolution were disregarded. The authors did not seek broad consultations, as required by General Assembly practice.

The very serious internal armed conflict opposing the Government of Syria to armed groups, the so-called Free Syrian Army, and terrorists of all types, including Al-Qaida, is, according to the authors of the draft resolution, a war waged by the authorities against its own people, as though there were no terrorist acts that have led to hundreds of deaths, abductions and other

crimes conducted by Jabhat al-Nusra. In fact, what we are seeing in Syria is the birth of an international terrorist organization that is shaping a very powerful anti-Government force. Instead of efforts to put an immediate end to the bloodshed and to launch a dialogue on the future of the country, we are witnessing attempts to interfere in the conflict on the side of unlawful armed groups, to put maximum pressure on Damascus and disregard the fact that the majority of Syrian society still supports the Syrian Government, which is obviously very worried about the chaos that could follow.

The draft resolution once again raises the possibility of a wave of confrontation, introduces division between Member States, distracts us from the aim of ending the violence, and sets up obstacles to the work of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and his efforts to implement the provisions of the Geneva communiqué of June 2012 (A/66/865, annex), which remains the basis for any political solution to the Syrian crisis.

It is particularly irresponsible and counterproductive to promote such attempts at a time when the United States and Russia have achieved a very important agreement on identifying an international settlement through an international conference based on the provisions of the Geneva initiative. At a time when the international community needs a unified approach in dealing with the two sides and promoting dialogue, we do not need destructive initiatives here at the United Nations, but rather thorough work to try to create an atmosphere where the opposing sides in the Syrian conflict can, with the support of neutral and external actors, be encouraged to put an end to this fratricidal war. The conference should be of a representative character, involving the participants of last year's conference in Geneva and other regional actors, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. The creation of negotiating teams for the two sides is a priority in order to unite the opposition around the constructive basis for dialogue, rather than driving them into an ever-widening spiral of violence.

Bearing all this in mind, we call on the authors to withdraw this counterproductive and odious text if they will not heed the voice of reason. We encourage Member States to speak out against this document or, at the very least, to not support it.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the deteriorating situation in Syria has not only taken a heavy toll on people's lives and property, but has also affected the security and stability of the region. China is deeply concerned.

We oppose and condemn all violence against innocent civilians. The Syrian issue cannot be resolved by military means, which will only lead to further conflict bloodshed, exacerbate rampant terrorism and extremism, and escalate tension among religious factions and ethnic groups. Such an outcome is not in the common interest of the Syrian people, the countries of the region or the international community at large.

With regard to the Syrian issue, the international community must respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations the principle of non-interference in internal affairs in particular, as well as international law and the basic norms governing international militias. The future and destiny of Syria can be decided only by the Syrian people. We oppose military intervention in Syria or the imposition of regime change.

China has always maintained that a political settlement is the only solution for the Syrian nation. Recently, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the international community as a whole have launched a new round of mediation efforts to promote a political settlement of the Syrian issue. China hopes that all parties will respond positively to and support those efforts. We urge the Syrian Government and the opposition to honour their obligations in earnest, immediately establish a ceasefire and cease the violence, launch a political dialogue and find a solution for political transition as soon as possible.

With regard to draft resolution A/67/L.63 on Syria, on which the General Assembly is about to vote, like many other Member States China has serious concerns with some parts and asks the sponsors to take the opinions of the various sides fully into account. To force a vote amid diverging views is neither in the interest of unity among Member States, nor in keeping with the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and the international community as a whole on the Syrian crisis.

China understands the concerns of Arab States and the League of Arab States to achieve an expedited settlement of the Syrian issue, and attaches great

importance to their key role in achieving a political settlement. China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community, including the Arab States, and to continue to play an active and instructive role in striving for a peaceful, just and proper settlement of the Syrian issue, safeguarding of the interests of Syria and other countries and peoples of the region, and maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to not deliver my prepared statement or to address the Assembly as a diplomat, reading out a text before voting on a draft resolution. In other words, I shall try to avoid taking a general position and instead look at the language before us. Let us try to work pragmatically and go beyond the caricatures that we have heard until now.

The first question we can ask ourselves is: Why have we come to the General Assembly to address the Syrian question? The answer is simple and tragic. First, a country is destroying itself. There are 80,000 dead. A region is at risk of being dragged into the crisis. Then, the Security Council action has been blocked by three vetos. We are told that the Security Council held a vote because it wanted to pressure one party. That is not true. The three draft resolutions that were vetoed included threats of sanctions — not even sanctions, but threats of sanctions — against the two parties if they did not agree to enter into negotiations. The Security Council's stalemate is the reason why the members of the League of Arab States and especially Qatar have submitted draft resolution A/67/L.63 to the Assembly. I would say that is a somewhat desperate move driven by the Security Council's inability to take action.

Secondly, we are told that the text is not balanced because it does not condemn terrorism and the violence on both sides. But that is false. When we consider the text, at the request of some authors many paragraphs condemn the violations committed by both sides. With regard to terrorism, we would have had to talk about State terrorism as well, because the Al-Assad regime uses cluster bombs and ballistic missiles against civilian neighbourhoods. As the Assembly knows very well, a Scud missile is not a precise weapon. It is used to kill, not to carry out an act of war. That, too, is terrorism.

The text before the Assembly is balanced. It condemns the violations committed by both sides. Human rights violations have been committed by both parties, but the reality is that the Syrian regime is the most responsible for massive human rights violations because of its use of weapons, some of which are prohibited, against the civilian population.

The second argument that I have just heard is that the Assembly is being asked to recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as the only representative of the opposition. In that regard, I am surprised. I am a diplomat, not a politician, so I have a rather limited perspective. I believe in words. Operative paragraph 26 of draft resolution A/67/L.63 says that the General Assembly

> "welcomes the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces ... as effective representative interlocutors needed for a political transition".

Yes, we recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as an interlocutor for political transition.

There is a certain hypocrisy in telling us, on the one had, that the opposition is divided and unable to negotiate. We are working to create an organization that will be an umbrella bringing together all sectors of the opposition so that it can negotiate for a political transition. Yet now we are told that this is not acceptable; that it is dangerous. But who is it dangerous for? It is certainly not dangerous for a political solution. As the Permanent Representative of the United States said, since the United States was able to reach an agreement with the Russian Federation, this text, far from opposing a political solution, actually encourages it, because it brings the international community's support to the creation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces — to the creation of an interlocutor that we need.

Why do we need an interlocutor? Because for 50 years the Al-Assad regime has killed, tortured and imprisoned all members of the opposition. Indeed, today, the opposition is fragmented and powerless. We must help the members of the opposition to work together in order to negotiate in order to be able to go to Geneva. They will go to the meeting in Geneva if it is held, and we hope with all our hearts that it shall.

I will not hold the Assembly up any longer. I would simply ask members to look at the text honestly, to look at the words that are on the page, because, in contrast to what has been said, the representative of Qatar has held negotiations with all the regional groups and has tried to

respond to questions that arose. The text is a moderate text that will in fact help the Syrian National Coalition and the Syrian Opposition Forces to negotiate. That is why France asks the Assembly to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): It has been more than two years since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, and there is very little hope for a peaceful and sustainable solution. As the Syrian crisis continues unabated, civilians are paying a heavy price as they are killed, maimed and displaced on a daily basis. The conflict has gone on for far too long under our watch. Now is the time to make our collective effort to bring peace to Syria.

South Africa deplores the continuing violence and tremendous loss of life in Syria, which is barrelling out of control and is quickly being compounded by a lack of consensus on the part of the international community on how best to resolve the protracted crisis.

We are alarmed by the latest developments on the ground, in particular the alleged use of chemical weapons and escalating terrorism and sectarianism. The use of heavy weapons by both sides in civilian areas should be condemned in the strongest possible terms. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to investigate the allegations of use of chemical weapons and hope that all the parties involved will cooperate accordingly. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian relief organizations in assisting the civilian population in difficult times. We call on all sides of the Syrian conflict to immediately stop the violence and focus on launching peaceful negotiations.

It is a tragedy that the Security Council, a body charged with the task of maintaining international peace and security, has to date not been able to agree on a solution to the protracted crisis. The Council has clearly abdicated its responsibilities in the face of human calamity. Members of the Security Council seem to have given priority to their own national interests at the expense of the Syrian people. In that regard, we implore the Security Council to honour its responsibilities and work towards the peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis which, if left unresolved for a long time, could plunge the whole region into political and economic chaos.

We re-emphasize that a military solution to the Syrian crisis is not possible. South Africa reiterates its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. We are disappointed that the Syrian parties have not been able to begin an inclusive dialogue that would lead to a peaceful transition and pave the way to a sustainable peace. The only way to achieve a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution that reflects the will of the people of Syria is through the implementation of the final communiqué issued by the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), which has been widely endorsed by the international community, including the Security Council.

Turning to the substance of draft resolution A/67/L.63 before us today, South Africa would like to express its disappointment that the general orientation of the text is unacceptable and that its contents have the potential to exacerbate rather than mitigate the situation. We believe that the text is not balanced, as it clearly supports one side, and that it has the dangerous potential to embolden the opposition and simultaneously force President Assad to retreat to an uncompromising position.

South Africa reiterates that all parties have obligations to cease the violence and comply with the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy and the Action Group final communiqué, which the draft resolution does not reflect accurately. The draft resolution fails to make a clear call for the cessation of the militarization of the conflict. In fact, the monies to be spent to arm the parties could be put to good use by providing much needed humanitarian assistance.

It is interesting that the draft resolution seeks to contradict the very principles upon which the Organization was established, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. It would be dangerous for us to bend the rules for the purpose of fulfilling narrow interests harboured by a few among us. Whereas we are aware of the need to address the Syrian crisis with the utmost urgency, we also believe that there is a need to respect the principles that are the basis for relations among nations. In that regard, we refer to the negligence of the sponsors of the draft resolution, who want to force us to recognize a particular leadership and denounce the present one. That is not desirable and could set a dangerous precedent.

Furthermore, the draft resolution advocates for regime change on behalf of peoples other than the Syrians themselves, despite the fact that we incessantly

caution against such behaviour. Some Member States still believe that they can dictate the leadership of other peoples' countries from outside. We have seen that happen previously and its results have been ruinous. Let us therefore refrain from that improper act.

It is somewhat peculiar that the draft resolution is being rushed to a vote despite the opening of a political window of opportunity as a result of the recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to host an international conference to address the Syrian crisis. Our view is that we should give the diplomatic process an opportunity to bring the parties to the negotiating table and not prejudge its outcome. We would also like to put on the record our disappointment with the sponsors of the draft resolution for ignoring the request of the Group of African States to have today's vote deferred to a later date for the purposes of giving the diplomatic initiative proposed by the Russian Federation and the United States a chance of success.

On the process, we are of the view that the draft resolution was not subject to the normal multilateral process to which all draft resolutions and other multilateral outcomes are subject. We believe that the process was neither transparent nor inclusive. In addition, while we were not given enough time and opportunity to comment and provide input on the draft resolution, our general concerns — including those formally presented through the trilateral mechanism sponsored by India, Brazil and South Africa — were not taken into account.

It is for the foregoing reasons that South Africa will not support the draft resolution to be voted on today. As we vote in that manner, we have the interests of the Syrian people at heart and will continue to work with other States Members of the United Nations and the international community at large to find a genuine, lasting solution to the crisis in Syria.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): The current crisis in Syria is acquiring new dimensions in the wake of growing sectarian violence, increasing extremism and criminal and illegal acts on the part of terrorist and extremist groups there. We have also witnessed a new round of air strikes by the Israeli regime that violate Syria's territorial integrity. There is growing concern that the operations of armed groups and the spillover of such acts into other areas in the region will pose a further threat and risk to regional security and stability. That makes our responsibility for supporting a Syrian-led political dialogue, aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis and ending the violence inside Syria, ever more urgent.

In the view of my delegation, draft resolution A/67/L.63 contradicts all the efforts currently being pursued internationally to reach a peaceful solution. Its terms and spirit also contradict the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We cannot and do not agree with it for the following reasons:

First, it is ironic that the draft resolution does not deal in any way with the recent Israeli attacks on Syria. The Israeli air strikes of 3 and 5 May, along with previous attacks, are all blatant acts of aggression and a clear and serious violation of the standards and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including paragraph 4 of Article 2, concerning the prohibition of the use of force against any Member State. Nothing can justify the use of force or acts of aggression against a sovereign State, and aggressors must be held accountable for any consequences arising from such reprehensible and illegitimate acts, which endanger regional and international peace and security.

Secondly, we believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in the quest for a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis. In our view, however, the draft resolution's approach vis-à-vis Syria is somewhat confrontational and certainly does not help to bring the parties to a dialogue that seeks to resolve the crisis peacefully and in a way that benefits the Syrian people as a whole. We need to help to facilitate the Syrian political groups' engagement with Syria's Government in a Syrian-led political process.

Thirdly, despite some changes, the main elements of the final draft of the resolution still support decisions taken outside the United Nations and include frameworks and mechanisms that do not correspond to the peaceful initiatives that the Organization should pursue under agreed processes, such as through the Geneva Action Group on Syria and the regional framework we are pursuing with some countries in the region aimed at achieving the prescribed peaceful goals. The draft resolution contains language that is at odds with the comprehensive political process supported by regional and international initiatives and the mandate of the United Nations-Arab League Joint Special Representative for Syria, and that can be

interpreted as being in line with certain attempts to alter or to impose illegitimate demands on the mandate of the Special Envoy. That would only undermine the efforts of the Joint Special Representative and other major international and regional initiatives seeking a complete cessation of the violence in Syria. We sincerely hope that Mr. Brahimi will stay resolute in his arduous mission.

Fourthly, the acknowledgement referred to in the draft resolution impinges on the Charter's provisions regarding respect for the sovereignty and integrity of Member States. It also creates a dangerous precedent that violates the most elementary principles of international law. My delegation cannot welcome or endorse decisions that go against the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in letter or spirit. The United Nations should remain an organization of principle, governed by the rule of law and free from the influence of decisions taken elsewhere.

Fifthly, regarding the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a prominent recent victim of such weapons, heartily condemns their use. It is now becoming clearer that certain elements of Syrian armed opposition groups have used chemical weapons, resulting in the death or injury of a number of innocent civilians in Syria, as testified to by Ms. Carla Del Ponte, a member of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Sixthly, the draft resolution does not explicitly recognize the armed groups' responsibility for resorting to acts of atrocity and violence. We believe it is important that the General Assembly's decisions be objective and balanced. Seventhly, the draft resolution violates the authority and jurisdiction of the General Assembly, particularly where it makes implicit reference to the involvement of the International Criminal Court in Rome.

Finally, it is important that any proposal before this Assembly be based on broad consultations with the wider membership and have its consent. It seems that the drafters have not heeded the substantive proposals and amendments proposed by representatives of other regional groups.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that at this stage, what is important is preventing any slowdown in international efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful means, including the upcoming second Geneva conference on this issue, which we also support. The States Members of the United Nations should, with the greatest possible sense of responsibility, work hand in hand to find a balanced formula for resolving the conflict. After all, what our Organization is about, and should remain dedicated to, is finding diplomatic solutions to political crises, including the current situation in Syria.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am going to follow the example set by the representative of France and, rather than reading a speech, attempt to make a contribution to this crucially important debate.

For more than two years now, humankind has born witness to and been assaulted to its core by a war that has cost 80,000 lives to date. It takes less than one second to say "80,000", but if we think about it and pause for a moment to consider what it means — each one of those people who has lost his or her life in this armed conflict — then, of course, we realize the magnitude of the atrocious situation afflicting the Syrian Arab Republic.

We have heard reports of the use of chemical weapons and heavy weapons. The horrors of this armed conflict have been conveyed through numerous media. Yesterday, a video emerged showing a so-called rebel leader tearing out the heart of a Syrian soldier and calling for the hearts of his enemies to be eaten.

I come from a relatively small country, which is not seeking any mining or petroleum contracts or cheap labour anywhere. We are simply profoundly concerned by the pain being felt at this time by the Syrian people.

Bolivia opposes draft resolution A/67/L.63, first for a number of issues regarding procedure. As certain previous speakers have stated, the draft resolution was not debated transparently, nor were broad consultations held. The consultations on the draft resolution were selective and, as the representative of South Africa pointed out, did not take account of the concerns of all regions of our planet.

Moreover, the manner in which the draft resolution has come to be debated here in the General Assembly calls our attention to the fact that it has been proposed at the very moment when Russia and the United States are proposing a peace conference and when there is a chance for a negotiated political solution to the conflict. In this regard, I believe that it is important to point out

that, for Bolivia, the draft resolution before does not seek to reduce or stop the escalation of violence. It does not seek to end the war in Syria; on the contrary, it seeks put out the conflagration by throwing more fuel on the fire. Of course, those who make a living from war will welcome the draft resolution's adoption.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are also struck by the fact that the draft resolution, if adopted, will obstruct the peace efforts not only of the countries mentioned but also of Joint Special Representative Brahimi. Moreover, we believe that it does not reflect reality, at least based on the Spanish version of the draft resolution we received. It is an unbalanced draft resolution. It is a biased draft resolution. It is a reductive draft resolution when it comes to the reality in Syria. We call it unbalanced because, upon reading it — again, at least the Spanish version — we note that the so-called coalition of forces opposed to the current Government of Syria apparently bear no responsibility for the atrocities being committed day after day in that country. The draft refers only to atrocities in general, either remaining neutral with regard to the parties or attributing them directly to the Government of Syria, but not in an explicit or open way. As we know, responsibility also lies with those groups for which the status of international legitimacy is being sought here today.

The intentions of the draft resolution are all too evident. It is part of a geopolitical strategy seeking to dominate the region and control its natural resources. It is part of the geopolitics of war. Whether there are terrorists among the ranks of the rebels or whether they sew the seeds of new threats and wars, the economies sustained by the war industry will emerge as winners, not victims.

Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would violate the principles on which the United Nations system was built. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of interference over sovereignty. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of militarism over politics. Bolivia opposes the draft resolution because its adoption would mean the triumph of war and the escalation of violence over the possibility of building the peace that is so badly needed in Syria.

Finally, we believe that the draft resolution goes beyond its immediate aims and seeks to overthrow a Government. It is clearly an attempt to exploit the United Nations system, to undermine its moral authority and to prevent it from fulfiling its mission of preventing conflicts in that part of the world.

Mr. Moreno Zapata (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our Bolivarian Government is profoundly concerned by the introduction of a draft resolution today that would exacerbate the situation in Syria. Not only would it exacerbate the situation in Syria, but it would also have extremely serious consequences for the region and international security — which the United Nations is mandated to protect — especially given the extraordinary alternative at our disposal in the "Geneva II" initiative, promoted by the Russian Federation and the United States.

In that regard, the United Nations should contribute to the pursuit of a swift peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, and to that end should support dialogue between the Syrian Government and political opposition groups that distance themselves from terrorism. Syrian must find peace and reconciliation for themselves.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will vote against draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", because we view it as biased, politicized and unbalanced. It advocates war over peace, undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, attributes responsibility for the climate of violence and instability in Syria to its Government and President, ignores the calls for political dialogue made by the Syrian Government, blocks the mediation efforts of the Joint Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and ignores the terrorist acts carried out by armed opposition groups.

The draft resolution proposes that the United Nations recognize the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. That potential recognition, as set out in the draft resolution, would not contribute to the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict. On the contrary, it would encourage a radicalization of the already extreme positions of the armed groups that make up the Syrian opposition. It would also entail ignoring a legitimate Government and set a terrible precedent for international law.

It is therefore unacceptable that international recognition be given to political groups reported as having carried out terrorist acts that have caused the deaths of many innocent civilians. Giving diplomatic recognition to the violent factions that make up the opposition would be an ill-advised decision that would open the door to any future opposition group in any sovereign country of the world seeking legitimacy and recognition before this organ of the United Nations. The draft resolution seeks to dispute the legitimacy of the Syrian Government and its representation before the United Nations, setting a precedent that would encourage disrespect for the principles that guide international relations and peaceful coexistence among sovereign nations.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that the legitimate representative of the Syrian people is the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad, and that the only possible transition is one that the Syrian people themselves decide upon, in an atmosphere of peace and inclusive political dialogue and without foreign intervention.

If it were to adopt the draft resolution, the General Assembly would be justifying foreign sponsorship of violence and terrorism. It would not contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion and protection of human rights or the observance of international humanitarian law. The draft resolution seeks to legitimize the rights of certain States to provide the Syrian opposition with all means necessary, including military means, to overthrow the Government. It would thereby endorse the illegal supply of arms to and financing of terrorist groups that undermine the peace and stability of a sovereign State.

In his most recent report, Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi stated that terrorists from over 29 countries have infiltrated Syria to overthrow the Government of Bashar Al-Assad. Of those, over 800 came from European countries. We must ask ourselves, is that the opposition that is seeking legitimacy and recognition?

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its support for the peace negotiations led by the Joint Special Representative for Syria. We encourage him to continue his efforts in the search for peace and to not give in to the pressure being exerted by neocolonial Powers. We believe that adopting this draft resolution would be to sabotage the efforts of the Special Representative.

Those promoting armed violence have discarded one peace proposal after another in order to promote confrontation and war. The deterioration of the conflict in Syria, including the threat of foreign military intervention, threatens the peace and stability of the region.

The attack by Israeli warplanes against the Syrian Arab Republic on 5 May was a serious violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Venezuela supports the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement, which calls on the Security Council to take the measures necessary to hold Israel accountable for its acts of aggression and prevent a large-scale regional war that would threaten regional and international peace and security.

All that is done to promote peace and political understanding among the Syrians must be encouraged. The meeting that is soon to be held in Geneva between the Governments of the Russian Federation and the United States will be a positive step towards achieving peace and stability in that Arab country. It is important to reiterate that the draft resolution introduced here today is incompatible with the Geneva initiative, which proposed a peaceful and inclusive solution. Venezuela supports all efforts to find a peaceful and lasting political solution to the conflict. We reiterate that, in order to achieve peace in Syria, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of that country must be respected.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): For over two years now, the issue of Syria has remained on the agenda of the international community. For over two years now, the international community's efforts to find a workable solution to the crisis have remained paralysed, and for over two years now, the number of innocent victims who have lost their lives has been increasing and is now in the tens of thousands.

The violence in Syria must stop. The Syrian people have suffered enough. All parties concerned, both inside and outside Syria, should refrain from taking any action that would not only prolong the conflict but also contribute to further violence and killings in Syria. It is important to recognize that there is no military solution to the conflict. Only a Syrian-led political transition can end the crisis.

Malaysia reiterates its full support for Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, for his selfless

determination to resume efforts to resolve any differences through negotiation, and we would continue to call and urge all parties involved in the conflict to support him in finding an amicable, peaceful and lasting political solution to the crisis. Malaysia encourages all parties to engage in moderation, good faith, compromise, understanding, rejection of extremism and peaceful dialogue in order to resolve this senseless conflict.

We urge the international community — in particular the United Nations, the League of Arab States, influential nations and regional players — to seek ways and means to provide protection to the Syrian civilian population, to express grave concern over the issue of chemical weapons, and to extend humanitarian assistance to Syrian civilians, who are the real victims in this unfortunate bloodshed.

While Malaysia maintains its policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another country and respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, we are nonetheless deeply concerned at the deterioration of the security situation in the country, which will have grave consequences for the stability and the security of the region. We feel that a peaceful political solution is still viable and the only option for resolving the crisis.

Malaysia has therefore decided to support draft resolution A/67/L.63 on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as we have consistently supported previous relevant resolutions on Syria. This is because of our strong belief in negotiating in good faith and in the multilateral system and its ability to find an amicable and peaceful solution. As before, Malaysia hopes that the implementation of the draft resolution before the General Assembly today will ensure that concrete and viable steps, including those agreed to in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (A/66/865, annex), towards a transitional governing body formed by mutual consent and an inclusive national dialogue would be respected by all parties involved in the conflict. Malaysia also welcomes the recent announcement of Russia and the United States of the convening of an international conference on Syria with the aim of finding a political solution to the conflict.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): Since 2011, the people of Syria have been trapped in a conflict that has reportedly so far claimed over 80,000 lives and has injured and displaced tens of thousands.

The Assembly is on record as having called on all parties to cease violence and spare the civilian population from the scourge of protracted violence. Indeed, all of us welcomed the appointment of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose tenure was short-lived, due to complications inherent in the conflict. Despite his premature departure, we welcomed and expressed high hopes for the road map he proposed. We also welcomed the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as Joint Special Envoy for Syria. His continued engagement with the parties in this conflict brought us hope and reinforced our strong belief that the Syrian conflict can be resolved only through genuine dialogue among the warring parties.

Regrettably, we have continued to witness rising armed opposition and undiminished armed response from the protagonists. This has meant the continued suffering of the civilian population and the broadening of the conflict. We are already witnessing the impact of the conflict in the neighbouring countries, the exodus of refugees, the flow of arms and, indeed, terrorist attacks. This is a real threat to international peace and security.

It is time to renew our faith in the Security Council and to call upon it to take the necessary measures for the sake of peace in Syria. Failure to discharge that responsibility will lead only to more disaster of unimagined proportions. We all stand to lose. The United Republic of Tanzania strongly believes that the Security Council should put aside its differences and agree on an appropriate course of action, prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations, to bring this conflict to an end. The Syrians have shed enough blood. They need actions from the Council and not words.

Efforts under the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), issued at its meeting in Geneva, which were recently reinvigorated in Moscow, deserve a chance and support. It is in the best interests of all Syrians and the friends of the Syrian people to support a peaceful and negotiated solution to resolve this deadly conflict. That is why we are in support of the call of the Group of African States to defer action on draft resolution A/67/L.63.

We also want to make it clear that the United Republic of Tanzania wants to see peace in Syria. We want to see the cessation of fighting and the suffering of the Syrian people. However, we do not see how the

draft resolution, in its current composition, contributes towards that end. It is in that regard that the United Republic of Tanzania will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution before the Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 33. We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.63.

I give the floor to representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", I wish to put on the record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In operative paragraphs 21 and 31 of draft resolution A/67/L.63, the General Assembly would request the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to submit a written report to the General Assembly, within 90 days, on the very dire situation of internally displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic in terms of safety and their basic rights and livelihood, and to provide recommendations with a view to meeting assistance and protection needs and strengthening the effectiveness of the international response to displacement; and request the Secretary-General to report within 30 days on the implementation of the present resolution.

It is anticipated that the request contained in operative paragraphs 21 and 31 for documentation would constitute additions to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two documents to be issued in all six languages. That would entail additional requirements of $113,200 for documentation services in 2013. In addition, it is estimated that the amount of $36,000 would be required under section 24, "Human rights", to provide for consultancy at the P-3 level for three months to assist in the preparation of the report, researching and analysing information from a variety of sources on the situation of internally displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

No provision has been included under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 for the aforementioned activity, and as such an additional allocation of funds would be required. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/67/L.63, additional requirements of $149,200 would arise, including $113,200 under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management", and $36,000 under section 24, "Human rights", of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. However, every possible effort would be made to absorb the additional requirements of $149,200 within the existing resources under sections 2 and 24, and report thereon in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2012-2013.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has been aggravated by the rise of terrorism and destruction in the country. In the midst of armed conflict, people are dying. As a whole, the increasingly dangerous situation has negative implications for the regional peace and security of the Middle East.

On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like to clarify my country's position with regard to the situation in Syria.

First, the situation in Syria should be settled on the basis of the principle of respect for sovereignty. Respect for sovereignty is the key to sound international relations and one of the fundamental elements set forth in the United Nations, every sovereign State should be respected in terms of its sovereignty. Syria is no exception in that regard.

The Syrian Government is a legitimate, democratically elected Government. In that regard, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to draw particular attention to the issue of the recent military attack by Israel. The military attack was conducted, as everyone knows, with the encouragement and support of a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States. That is a flagrant violation and infringement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It is also a rampant violation of international law.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, condemning that military

act and asking the Security Council to take immediate action. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea firmly believes that the Security Council's failure to address such rampant violations of international law and acts of aggression can only tarnish its image and have negative repercussions on the confidence the world has in the Council, whose mandate and mission are international peace and security.

Secondly, the situation in Syria should be settled without violating the principle of non-interference. The issue of Syria is one that belongs totally and ultimately to Syria. It is an issue that is to be settled by the people of Syria themselves, who know what is in their best interests. Interference by external actors will only aggravate the situation and has no chance of settling the conflict peacefully. The armed conflict is far more serious than when the problem began. Having dragged on for two years, it is now a full-fledged armed conflict as the result of external interference by outside actors meddling in Syria's internal affairs.

Thirdly, the situation should be settled by political means. When we speak of political means, we mean dialogue and the diplomatic process. There should be inclusive political dialogue led by the Syrian people. Regime change is not a solution. It will only aggravate the problem and increase the conflict without any hope of settling the issue.

Consistent with the aforementioned principles, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the instructions we have received, the delegation of Uruguay will abstain in the imminent voting on draft resolution A/67/L.63. Our position in no way affects the fact that Uruguay is profoundly worried about the humanitarian crisis prevailing in Syria. We think that it is important for the General Assembly — given the paralysis of the Security Council, which holds the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — to take a clear and strongly united position with regard to the humanitarian tragedy that we are witnessing in order to bring the crisis to an end.

Our abstention is simply an expression of caution with regard to certain aspects of the draft resolution that are not linked to humanitarian aspects and do not fully address the concerns expressed by the Government of my country with regard to certain sensitive aspects included in the section of the draft text on the political transition, which goes beyond the consensus and principles applicable to the concept of recognition of Governments, endorsements decided by regional organizations of which we are not a member, and the possible effects of such considerations in the search for an inclusive political solution to the crisis.

Two years of war have gone by — two years of unbearable suffering for the Syrian people. The latest figures cite 94,000 deaths, of which 50,000 would be of civilians. More than 1 million refugees and 4 million displaced persons are figures that speak eloquently of the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, we are too accustomed to reading and hearing figures and numbers. That is why I believe that we need to strive to put human faces on the tragedy and to think of the thousands of women who have been raped, children who have been murdered and victims who have been tortured — human beings who have been brutalized and dehumanized.

In the meantime, the international community continues to fail to respond. The Security Council remains silent, and we in the General Assembly have not managed to reach a broad consensus on the key issue of the crisis, namely, the humanitarian tragedy. Furthermore, allow me to say that we continue to believe that action by international criminal jurisdictions is essential to putting an end to impunity and to contributing to put a stop to the horrors taking place before our very eyes.

That was why Uruguay, along with 50 other States, recently signed a note asking the Security Council to forward the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court, so that those who have committed these crimes, regardless of whether they belonged to the Government or the opposition forces, can be prosecuted.

In spite of the general acceptance of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and the commitment undertaken by our Heads of State and Government in 2005 concerning our responsibility to protect civilian populations against war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing or genocide, it is unfortunately very likely that Syria will be remembered in future as the worst humanitarian disaster of the early twenty-first century. Srebrenica, Sarajevo and Rwanda resonate in our memory with shameful and

shocking immediacy, and this disaster must be stopped before loathing and shame overwhelm us.

This is not about political considerations concerning factions or groups; this is about the Syrian people, who must be able to freely determine their future as a sovereign people. We are talking about protecting people and their lives from aggressors, regardless of the side they find themselves on. We respect the principles of non-intervention and of nations' right to self-determination, but we also believe that there is an ethical and legal duty to uphold basic human rights.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua wishes to explain why it plans to vote against draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". The provisions of the draft resolution contradict the agenda item under which it is submitted, "Prevention of armed conflict". The text before us promotes war and militarization. It is unbalanced and completely unobjective. It is an initiative that is not constructive in any way, because its fundamental goal is neither to promote an immediate end to the violence nor to seek a negotiated solution to the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political dialogue. The draft resolution not only does not contribute to peace, but continues to fuel war.

Not only is the draft resolution counterproductive; its introduction at this time ignores the discussion and initiatives undertaken by Russia and the United States on 7 May in Moscow with the aim of organizing a second conference based on the agreements reached in Geneva in 2012, in which all the parties involved in the conflict would participate, and which would lay the groundwork for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis. It is in that context that Nicaragua believes that supporting today's draft resolution would be a severe blow to the initiatives that peace-loving countries strongly support.

Another aspect to which we would like to draw the Assembly's attention is the lack of transparency, inclusivity, cooperation and participation in the process of drafting and submitting the draft resolution. The intentions and motives behind it have been clear from the start. It would lead us to endorse policies of aggression that would arm, organize and finance armed groups, many of whose names are on the Security Council's list of terrorists responsible for violence in North Africa and the Middle East, and Syria in particular. It would condemn us to reject any peaceful solution to this conflict, a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

The aim behind the draft resolution is to impose regime change favouring foreign interests and grant non-existent legitimacy to armed terrorist groups that not only do not represent the Syrian people but cannot even agree among themselves on their self-proclaimed legitimacy. We warn the Assembly of the risk of establishing a very dangerous precedent that, while used today against the legitimate Government of Syria, tomorrow could be used against any legitimate Government represented here.

The draft resolution is a flagrant violation of the Charter, the principles of State sovereignty, non-interference and non-intervention by foreign Powers in the internal affairs of another State, and territorial integrity. The purpose of the United Nations is to strive for international peace and security; its priorities should be dialogue, reconciliation, mediation and negotiation rather than violence and the promotion of an arms race or a war. The draft resolution does not contribute to achieving the goals of our Organization or creating an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. It also complicates the good offices of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Brahimi.

Nicaragua has always proclaimed its commitment to peace, love of life, rejection of violence and war, and unshakeable determination to defend the sovereignty and solidarity of peoples against colonial occupation and imperialism. Those principles have guided us throughout the process of our people's Sandinista revolution. We have always lamented the loss of innocent life in any part of the world and condemned violence in all its forms and manifestations.

Rather than discuss a draft resolution that incites violence and an arms race, what the international community should do is encourage efforts to immediately end the flow of arms to terrorist groups, establish a basis for negotiations, bring all parties to the conflict to the negotiating table, and call on all States with an interest in the region to demonstrate political will and commit to a peaceful solution that will enable Syrians to restore security and determine their own future through a political process that they lead themselves.

In conclusion, we wish to go on record once again as firmly rejecting any interference in the internal affairs

of States. We cannot allow another negative precedent to be set for nations around the world; we must reject policies of military intervention, aggression, regime change and war. We have before us a draft resolution that, if adopted, would have woeful consequences for the peoples of the world. We urge members not to allow the General Assembly to be used for purposes at odds with those for which it was created. Let us give peace a chance and reject war.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I am taking the floor to give a brief explanation of the position of Indonesia on draft resolution A/67/L.63. The fundamental position of Indonesia with regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as conveyed in various forums, has remained the same. I would like to emphasize the following pertinent points.

First, Indonesia remains deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict in Syria and its impact on the Syrian people. The destruction and death of thousands require us to urge all parties to immediately cease their acts of violence and hostilities. Secondly, it is also paramount that all parties to the conflict exhibit the greatest respect for international human rights and humanitarian law and ensure that unfettered and safe humanitarian access to those in need be granted. Thirdly, it is imperative that all parties to the conflict pursue its peaceful resolution through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process.

With regard to the draft resolution, Indonesia welcomes its emphasis on the ending of violence and the importance of unhindered humanitarian access. However, its implied recognition of who constitutes the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people would not be consistent with Indonesia's national practice, which accords recognition only to States and not to Governments. Furthermore, that may be perceived as being inconsistent with the well-established principles of international relations regarding the sovereign right of the people of the country concerned to determine their legitimate representatives.

In conclusion, it is more critical than ever that the international community, represented by the Security Council and the General Assembly, stand united in bringing an immediate end to the violence in Syria, promote humanitarian assistance and launch a Syrian-led political process. For those reasons, Indonesia will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to explain Ecuador's vote on draft resolution A/67/L.63, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since the crisis began, Ecuador has followed with deep concern the ongoingdeterioration of the human rights situation in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. We have on several occasions expressed our consternation at the grave violations of human rights. We have condemned them and insisted that those acts must not go unpunished, but that those who have carried out acts of violence, as well as those who have provided weapons and ammunition to the various actors, including organized terrorist groups, must be held to account.

Today, my delegation reiterates its firm condemnation of any violation of human rights by whomsoever committed. We express our solidarity with the Syrian people, and in particular with the victims of the widespread violence and their families. We regret, however, that, with the draft resolution before us for adoption today, we are permitting the continuation of a practice that, over the past two years, has, in different guises, served only to close off the path of dialogue and, in all likelihood, to exacerbate the critical humanitarian situation afflicting our brothers and sisters in Syria.

Ecuador is profoundly concerned by the language of the draft resolution, which is at odds with the Charter of the United Nations. It does not take all of the parties responsible for the crisis sufficiently into account. It will polarize the conflict and will not contribute to a solution involving all parties in Syria and leading to the swift restoration of peace, in the utmost respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

We are further surprised, and we say so without subterfuge, by the double standards by which the text completely ignores terrorist acts that, far from promoting peace, have served only to fuel further war, bloodshed, death and destruction for the Syrian people. Moreover, it goes against the fundamental purpose for which the United Nations was established — the tireless pursuit of peace.

The draft resolution before us today is at odds with Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex). Worse still, it ignores and upends the agreement of

7 May between Russia and the United States, which is a matter of public record.

While Ecuador highly values its friendship with many Arab countries, we are of the view that the decisions of the League of Arab States cannot be taken as universal, because the majority of States Members of the United Nations are not members of the Arab League.

My delegation believes that matters relating to the human rights situation in specific countries must be considered by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and in particular through the universal periodic review mechanism, which was created for that purpose. Bringing such a draft resolution before the General Assembly in New York only politicizes the issue, skews it and submits it to the logic of the most powerful. It is all the more paradoxical that the draft resolution, which will continue to exacerbate the situation in Syria without truly helping the victims of armed conflict in that country, was submitted under agenda item 33, "Prevention of armed conflict".

For all of these reasons, and in order to avoid a situation whereby the General Assembly is used to legitimize international coups d'états — given the experience of only a decade ago, which we cannot and must not forget — my country poses the question: "Who is next on the list"? For all of this, Ecuador will vote against the draft resolution.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Some time ago, at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the Head of State of Argentina, speaking at the South American-Arab Summit in Peru, supported the same position that Argentina will again support today in the General Assembly. At that meeting in 2012, our Head of State stated that we were in favour of a peaceful solution in Syria that was politically negotiated without foreign intervention.

We call for a peaceful solution to all conflicts, strict multilateralism in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and conflict resolution through negotiations, because today the main threat to peace is not a nuclear holocaust but rather local conflicts that spill over into their respective regions and then drag the whole world along with them, thanks to the lucrative arms industry in developed countries. In addition, we cannot ignore the existence of hegemony. When we demand equality and multilateralism — and thus the respect for the Charter that we have all sworn to uphold — we cannot ignore the greater share of responsibility that is incumbent upon certain countries in resolving and sometimes even in triggering conflicts.

Bearing that in mind, and on the basis of values that we have always championed and continue to champion, such as peace and full respect for human rights in all countries, Argentina, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the General Assembly, reiterates the same conviction. Peace is not merely a naive and formal statement of what our desires, but rather a value that must be built on the basis of truth, justice and equality.

There will be no peace in Syria until the whole truth of the situation is told. Thus, the General Assembly, the Security Council and other organs must act in accordance with a single standard to build the peace, equality and truth that we deserve and to contribute to finding an effective, lasting and coherent political solution for Syria.

In the light of the chilling humanitarian situation, the massive violations of the human rights of the Syrian people, and the serious ramifications of the conflict for the entire region, draft resolution A/67/L.63 before the Assembly today contains a series of elements that my country agrees with, in particular those contained in the section on international humanitarian law and human rights. Over the past few weeks, my delegation has made a number of comments that have consistently reflected our profound conviction that the only possible solution to the Syrian crisis is through an inclusive political dialogue, without preconditions, involving all sectors of Syrian society and on the basis of the road map proposed by the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (A/66/865, annex).

We appreciate the attempts of the authors of the draft resolution to include some of these considerations in the text. Unfortunately, other considerations of particular importance were not taken into account. I will briefly cite a few.

First, the draft resolution continues to call the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. While Argentina believes that the emergence and consolidation of a democratic opposition is essential in order to have a reliable partner in and for Syrian society, in order to begin the process of political dialogue as provided for and requested in the Geneva communiqué, it is up to the Syrian people,

through free and fair elections, and not the General Assembly, to determine the democratic legitimacy of its representatives.

Secondly, the implications of a joint reading of paragraphs 26 and 30 continue to present problems for us. In addition to recognizing the opposition coalition as the legitimate representative of Syria, the tasks entrusted to the Secretary-General appear to include the initiation of a transition plan, without mention of the fact that such a plan should be the result of an agreement achieved through a transparent and inclusive political process.

Thirdly, in spite of our many requests, the draft resolution does not include a clear statement that there is no military solution to the crisis or a clear appeal to avoid additional militarization of the conflict. In January, Argentina launched an appeal to the Security Council that we would like to reiterate today. Once again, we call on all States providing weapons and related material to the parties to the conflict in Syria to end to that practice immediately. For ethical reasons and based on our political conviction, we reject any intention and all activities carried out either by the Government or by the opposition and rebel groups that foster or seek to foster military means of solving the crisis.

To conclude, in addition to the points I have just mentioned, we would also like to mention that, in the past few days, a new door has opened towards reaching a negotiated agreement. The understanding reached by the United States and Russia to convene an international conference offers a concrete opportunity for diplomacy and dialogue rather than armed force. We believe that the draft resolution before us has elements that could be interpreted as contrary to that initiative at a time when the energy of the international community should be focused on sending a message of unity and support to these efforts.

Argentina has consistently voted in favour of resolutions pertaining to Syria in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We have done so in the conviction that such resolutions send a clear message that violence should cease and have brought us closer to a peaceful solution. We have already fallen too far behind on Syria. Let us not fall further behind with our little machinations, our overconfidence, our indifference and our scepticism. There is no time to lose. History can always take one of two opposite paths — towards freedom or oppression, towards peace or violence. On the basis all of the comments that have been made and the points that we agree on as well as our substantial differences, Argentina will abstain in the voting today.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will vote against the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63. We will do so because it does not contribute to the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation facing the Syrian people. On the contrary, the adoption of such a draft resolution could further exacerbate the instability and violence in a country that is already experiencing serious instability and violence. This is a biased document that addresses current events in the Syrian Arab Republic in a partial manner. We reject once again the attempt to ignore the proposals and measures taken by the Syrian Government and the efforts undertaken by some countries to prevent further violence in that brotherly country.

Inciting a civil war in Syria or an intervention by foreign forces could have serious consequences for all of humankind, and particularly for the tumultuous region of the Middle East. All acts of violence, massacres and terrorist attacks taking innocent lives in Syria must end. It is alarming to hear calls from some in favour of regime change in Syria and of force and violence instead of dialogue and negotiations among the parties. We urge all those promoting foreign intervention in Syria or contributing to the fragmentation of the country, with the support of various armed factions of the opposition, to show greater political responsibility to avoid more bloodshed on all sides.

The media's manipulation of the situation surrounding the events occurring in Syria must also end. We are very concerned about how the Western commercial media machine shamelessly treats the situation in Syria with political aims in mind, inciting violence that increases the suffering of the Syrian people.

Taking into account recent precedents and experiences of manipulation of the Charter of the United Nations and the double standards that characterize the actions of the United States and other members of NATO, we again condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We are in favour of a political solution to the current crisis with full respect for the sovereignty and independence

of Syria. The role of the international community is to offer aid to safeguard peace and stability in the country, not to incite acts leading to deaths, terrorism, aggression against innocent people and civil unrest. We continue to reaffirm our confidence in the ability of the Government and the people of Syria to resolve their internal problems without external assistance and demand full respect for the self-determination and the sovereignty of that Arab country.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): For the past two years, Pakistan has witnessed the suffering of the people of Syria with deep pain and anguish. The Syrian tragedy unfolding under the sharp international spotlight has been a challenge to the conscience of the global community. Despite the means and institutions at the disposal of the international community to maintain peace and security, the killing has continued unabated in Syria. And yet it is not a war; it is an internecine conflict in which Syrian is killing Syrian. All those fighting today in that unfortunate land are inflicting wounds on their own body, Syria. In Syria, weapons speak and diplomacy is silent.

Syria is in turbulence. More than 70,000 Syrians are dead. Six million people have taken flight, 1.5 million of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The humanitarian catastrophe in Syria is getting worse by the day. The fires of sectarianism, extremism and terrorism are consuming entire communities and neighbourhoods. The conflict threatens to engulf the whole region. Syria is a ticking bomb that could trigger a wider conflict along ethnic and religious lines. There is a risk that the huge quantities of sophisticated weapons reaching Syria now will be used to fuel local and regional terrorism in the future.

There is an urgent need for diplomacy at three levels. First, we need an agreement among key States of the international community to end the impasse in the Security Council. In that context, we welcome the recent engagement between the United States and the Russian Federation. Secondly, the Syrian Government and representatives of the opposition should meet without further delay and without insisting on their caveats and qualifications about the venue and representatives. Their timely decisions will stop further bloodshed and suffering. Thirdly, countries of the region should play a constructive and supportive role in stopping the killing in Syria and helping the Syrian people move towards dialogue, reconciliation and transition.

Hopes for a renewed dialogue in Geneva have been rekindled. Representatives of the Syrian Government and the opposition should show maturity and agree on a mechanism with full executive authority, as agreed in the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex), to negotiate a transition towards reconciliation, peace and stability. At the present stage, the General Assembly and the Security Council should strengthen the hand of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in order to revive the stalled Geneva process. In that dialogue process, Syrian ownership is important. No attempt should be made to impose solutions from outside. The Syrian people will carve out their own destiny and decide the nature and structure of their own body politic.

Now is the time for diplomacy, now is the time for the collective wisdom of the international community to stop the current spate of carnage, displacement and degradation in Syria. If diplomacy to succeed, the supply of weapons to all sides should be stopped forthwith. All sides should heed the Secretary-General's call for an arms embargo.

Pakistan has decided to vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.63 primarily to signal its solidarity with the people of Syria and with the League of Arab States, the Gulf States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Syria's neighbours. We understand the compelling imperatives of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

We would also like to make our position clear on the following issues. First, the draft resolution does not give recognition to the Syrian National Coalition (SNC).

Second, the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria will not be violated. The SNC may send opposition representative-interlocutors to engage in dialogue with the Syrian Government directly or under the auspices of the United Nations.

Third, we understand that the Syrian Government has given clear assurances to the Secretary-General that it would not use chemical or biological weapons. Those assurances should be given due weight.

Fourth, the draft resolution should have been more balanced to reflect objectively the reality on the ground by assigning responsibility to all sides for the worsening of the situation.

Fifth, the draft resolution does not adequately address the rise of terrorism in Syria. Terrorism is the elephant in the room. It dominates the country. With its global and regional orientation, terrorism will cause devastation in Syria and beyond. Terrorism in Syria is not merely a subset of the conflict in the country. It has assumed its own independent persona. Efforts to bring peace and stability in Syria will not succeed without adoption and pursuit of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

Sixth, we take note of the resolutions of the League of Arab States insofar as they are related to the resolution of the political situation in the country.

Seventh, we do not think that the time is appropriate for a referral of the situation in Syria or specific cases related to it to the International Criminal Court.

In closing, we would like to emphasize that the draft resolution should not become an instrument of division. We hope that it will have a positive impact on the revival of the Geneva process, and help make progress towards a substantive dialogue leading to a political dispensation that is acceptable to the Syrian Government and opposition. It is not meant to supplant the Geneva process or prejudge its outcome.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The General Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/67/L.63, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/67/L.63, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Micronesia, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia and Spain.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.63. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu, Yemen

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Dominica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia

Draft resolution A/67/L.63 was adopted by 107 votes to 12, with 59 abstentions (resolution 67/262).

The Acting President: Due to the lateness of the hour, we will hear members' explanations of vote after the vote this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.35 p.m.

Mrs. Adhikari (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the adoption of resolution 67/262, I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): The human tragedy that marks the present situation in Syria is of the utmost concern to Brazil. We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of all violence. All parties, most particularly the Government of Syria, must fulfil their obligation to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law. Once again, we strongly call on all parties involved to immediately and unconditionally put an end to all forms of violence and to pursue an inclusive Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Brazil supports several of the main messages of resolution 67/262, in particular four aspects. Brazil stresses the need for a negotiated solution to the crisis, in line with the provisions of the Geneva communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), which remains a consensus basis for a comprehensive and effective road map to put an end to the conflict. We also fully support the provisions regarding the condemnation of violence, the demands for the cessation of the grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by both parties, and the inadmissibility of the use of chemical weapons. We also wholeheartedly support the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Encouraging proposals for a peaceful and political resolution of the Syrian crisis are being formulated even as we meet, which deserve serious consideration by Member States and the Secretary-General.

The United Nations should strive to reach decisions that contribute to the establishment of an environment conducive to understanding among all Syrian parties. It is not clear the extent to which resolution 67/262 contributes to the creation of such an environment.

In the course of the negotiations, Brazil, together with other countries from our region, engaged with the authors of the resolution to convey our concerns about several of its aspects. Unfortunately, the text still falls short of what we consider necessary for a General Assembly message that aspires to bring about a positive impact on the ground.

The fact that the text lacks an explicit call for no further militarization of the conflict is unjustifiable. The General Assembly cannot shy away from clearly stating that there can be no military solution to the crisis. The absence of a statement of that sort weakens the faith in the resolve of the international community to end the conflict through diplomatic means.

The resolution could also have included important findings and conclusions made by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission has very often drawn attention to the crippling effects of the sanctions regime on the Syrian people. It has also recommended that the international community should curb the proliferation and supply of weapons and address the sources thereof, bearing in mind the regional implications and related responsibility in the vicinity and beyond.

In the same vein, it is not for the General Assembly, at this juncture, even indirectly, to bestow legitimacy on or to decide who should be the representative of the Syrian opposition, let alone of the Syrian people. That is a matter for the Syrians themselves to decide.

Furthermore, Brazil believes that the purpose and implications of the tasks entrusted to the Secretary-General in paragraphs 29 and 30 of the resolution deserve better clarification. That is especially true if we agree that an upcoming international conference will likely provide an updated road map for a political transition. If read in conjunction with paragraph 26, which may imply some level of acknowledgement of the Syrian National Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, paragraph 30 may be construed as requesting the Secretary-General to take measures to initiate transition planning and to allocate resources to that end, even in the absence of one of the parties' consent to that transition. That could further complicate the situation, with far-reaching implications for the impartiality of the Organization, and therefore for its legitimacy and credibility.

It is now time to create improved conditions for the parties to negotiate in and to highlight what unites us,

in a collective effort to ensure a positive outcome for a possible conference that will move beyond the Geneva Action Group initiative of last year. We fail to see how the resolution serves that purpose.

In conclusion, Brazil remains committed to a negotiated resolution of the conflict in a way that stops the bloodshed, rejects extremism, builds stability in the region and responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom, democracy and social justice.

Mr. Mukerji (India): India remains deeply concerned about the unabated violence in Syria and the suffering it continues to cause to the Syrian people. The military approach pursued by various sides to the conflict has undermined the efforts for a political solution to the crisis. Violence has assumed a serious sectarian nature, and terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, have entrenched themselves. All those developments will have long-term repercussions for national, regional and international peace and security. Reports about the alleged use of chemical weapons are also deeply worrying.

We strongly condemn all violence in Syria as well as all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We condemn all attacks directed at women and children, civilians, United Nations peacekeepers and public institutions and infrastructure. We also condemn in the strongest terms possible all terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria.

We are particularly concerned that United Nations peacekeepers have been repeatedly targeted by rebel groups and taken hostage, including on two recent occasions. That is completely unacceptable. It is imperative that the sanctity of United Nations peacekeepers be respected by all sides. The United Nations must send a clear signal that such acts will not be tolerated and will bring the full weight of the international community against the perpetrators.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, India has consistently called on all the parties to abjure violence, dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and pursue a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sectors of Syrian society. We have also contributed assistance worth $2.5 million to mitigate the humanitarian impact of the crisis.

We believe that the joint communiqué of the Geneva Action Group (A/66/865, annex), adopted in June 2012, provides a good basis for a resolution of the Syrian crisis through a Syrian-led political process that respects Syria's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty and involves all sectors of Syrian society and meets their legitimate aspirations. The task of the international community, anchored in the United Nations, is to assist the Syrian parties in that process, without prejudging its outcome. Also, it is important that the further militarization of the conflict, including support for terrorist and armed groups, cease forthwith. Those are the principles that have guided our consideration of resolution 67/262, which the Assembly voted upon earlier today.

Whether any group is the legitimate representative of the Syrian people or not can only be determined by the Syrian people, not the Assembly. Therefore, certain provisions of the resolution can be interpreted as effecting regime change by sleight of hand. This is a dangerous precedent, which we cannot acquiesce to. We would once again reiterate our position that the leadership of Syria is a matter for Syrians to decide themselves.

As we said earlier, unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis. It will only exacerbate the problem and cause greater instability and violence, even beyond Syria's borders. We think that, following the settlement of the conflict, Syrians themselves should establish accountability for crimes committed by Syria. That cannot be done by outsiders. We also believe that the promotion of political dialogue requires engagement with all the parties concerned and that calls for a boycott of the Government and support for the opposition will not help.

Due to those shortcomings, we abstained in the voting on the resolution.

India remains committed to supporting the efforts of the United Nations, including those of Joint Special Representative Lakdhar Brahimi, to resolve the Syrian crisis expeditiously through inclusive political dialogue among the Syrian parties. We also welcome the recent decision by the Russian Federation and the United States to convene a meeting of the Action Group with the Syrian parties. We hope that all sides will engage seriously, realistically and unconditionally to resolve the crisis in the best interests of the Syrian people, the region and the larger international community.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile voted in favour of resolution 67/262, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Once again today, the General Assembly has been obliged to consider the current situation in Syria, where a critical humanitarian situation also entails an increasingly tragic situation in terms of the political situation, security, human rights and governability. This crisis is increasingly becoming a threat to regional peace and security. The systematic use of violence by all parties to the conflict must cease.

As we have done in the case of previous resolutions on the subject, my delegation welcomes the fact that the General Assembly has once again energetically condemned the systematic and massive violations of human rights taking place in the Syrian Arab Republic. This unacceptable use of force is being used indiscriminately against the unarmed civilian population both by the Government, whose primary responsibility is to protect its own citizens, and by other parties to the crisis. As a result, there are arbitrary executions, assassinations, targeting of human rights defenders and journalists, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, torture and sexual and gender-based violence, including violence against children. It seems to us of vital importance that the resolution that has been adopted reiterates the condemnation of violence and the urgent need to bring to justice those responsible for the serious violations of human rights, whether they be part of the Government or the opposition, including those violations that could constitute crimes against humanity.

Chile voted in favour of the resolution in the hope that that expression on the part of the international community, represented by the General Assembly, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and in alignment with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, will contribute to the political dialogue and ensure the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) — that is, a Syrian process and one without foreign involvement.

In the light of what I have just said, we would like to reassert that it is not the role of the General Assembly to determine the legitimacy of the representatives of the Syrian people; that is their exclusive prerogative. We take note of the existence of the Syrian National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as one of the interlocutors in the necessary pluralistic and democratic dialogue towards a political transition. Similarly, while we recognize the efforts made by the League of Arab States and reiterate the importance of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, we also believe that their decisions can be applicable only to their members.

As called for by the Geneva communiqué, it is essential to put an end to the militarization of the conflict. In that regard, we agree with the reiterated appeals to the parties to find a political solution to the conflict by both the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, both of whom we strongly support.

The worsening of the humanitarian situation and the indiscriminate use of violence by all players have confirmed the fact that a military solution is not a solution and that an inclusive political dialogue is the political solution. Despite today's action by the General Assembly, we hope that the Security Council, in particular those countries that have the greatest influence on the parties, will contribute to finding a solution to the conflict. Such a politico-institutional outcome should come from the Syrians themselves without any distinction and it should lead to the establishment of a Syria that is fully and genuinely democratic. We hope that the message sent today, added to the recent announcement made by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to hold a conference between the Government and the opposition, will allow for such an outcome to be found.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the humanitarian efforts being made by those countries that are hosting a huge number of refugees from the Syrian crisis, countries on which a responsibility has fallen that is becoming more and more difficult to assume. We therefore remind the principal donors of the need to meet their commitments towards the refugees. We also acknowledge the International Red Cross and the International Red Crescent, the relevant United Nations agencies and various non-governmental organizations for the enormous efforts that they have deployed in that regard.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): Singapore remains deeply concerned about the increasing violence in Syria, the worsening humanitarian crisis on the ground and the suffering being inflicted upon the Syrian people. In particular, we strongly condemn the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the Syrian Government,

which has resulted in a very high casualty rate and has led to the displacement of a large number of civilians. The Syrian Government must act immediately to protect the safety of its own people. However, the situation in Syria is very complex. Different armed groups are also using force. We call upon all the parties involved to immediately cease all violence, as many innocent people are paying a heavy price.

Singapore voted in favour of the two previous General Assembly resolutions on Syria. However, we were obliged to abstain in the voting today. Singapore supports a Syrian-led political process that leads to a transition that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people, as called for in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. However, Singapore is not in a position to support proposals that confer international recognition on any particular opposition group as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala is one of the countries that voted in favor of previous resolutions of the General Assembly on this topic without expressing major reservations. We did so because we have taken a principled approach to the conflict in Syria, with an emphasis on the following aspects: first, the imperative of putting an end to the violence, which has cost so many lives and caused so much suffering; secondly, the imperative of respecting the human rights of the civilian population; thirdly, the imperative that the Government of Syria provide unrestricted access to humanitarian aid; and, fourthly, the imperative of seeking a negotiated political transition led by Syrians but with the support of the international community, in the framework provided by the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) issued by the Action Group on 30 June 2012. That implies respecting the territorial integrity of Syria and opening the way to a pluralistic, inclusive and tolerant system of governance. We also seek to avoid the Syrian crisis from spreading even further to neighbouring States, which are already under great stress. Furthermore, we have reiterated at all times our support to the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. All those elements are reflected in the resolution that was adopted today (resolution 67/262), and that is why we have voted in favour of it.

However, we continue to have serious concerns, some of which are based on elements contained in the text of the resolution and others which, in our judgment, should have been included in the text but are absent.

In the first category, namely, those elements of the text which cause concern, we must state that Guatemala welcomed the establishment of the Syrian National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as an appropriate nucleus of contacts between the opposition and the Government, but we have never recognized it as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, as could be surmised from the text of the resolution. It is therefore our understanding that the nineteenth preambular paragraph and paragraphs 26 and 30 do not commit the entire membership of the General Assembly to such recognition.

In the second category, namely, those elements which in our judgment are missing in the text, we would have preferred that the resolution expressly proposed the demilitarization of the conflict with a call to limit the delivery of arms to all parties. In that regard, we understand that the reference to all the relevant resolutions of the League of Arab States in the eighteenth preambular paragraph and in paragraph 27 refers only to the political transition.

In spite of what I have just said, by voting in favour of the resolution we wanted to add our voice to the general call to put an end to the violence, whose scale, scope, characteristics and extended duration are offensive to all humankind. It is time to end the bloodshed in the country and seek a negotiated outcome for the long, dark night that has descended on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of the resolution adopted this morning (resolution 67/262) because we believe it essential that the international community send a clear message to the Government and the other belligerants in Syria, as well as the countries that are militarily involved in the conflict, about the importance of putting an end to the tragedy that has convulsed this country and find a path to a political transition leading to peace and democracy.

In order to prevent the situation from becoming even more critical and involving the whole of the surrounding area in the violence, it is imperative that we seek a solution that meets the terms of reference of the communiqué issued on 30 June 2012 in Geneva by the Action Group for Syria (A/67/865, annex). In that regard, we welcome the recent agreement between

the Secretary of State of the United States and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on holding an international conference to open a way forward towards a peaceful and inclusive transition in Syria.

The ultimate goal of any negotiations, as paragraph 26 of the resolution states, must establish "a civil, democratic and pluralistic Syrian Arab Republic, where all citizens are equal regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity". For that reason, we reject both the current status quo of repression and crimes against humanity as well as the imposition of intolerance, sectarianism and terrorist violence.

Costa Rica is voting so that Syrians can return as soon as possible to a Government that is the result of the free expression of the people's will and not imposed militarily by a few groups. We appeal urgently to the Syrian Government to respect its commitment to international law, particularly international human rights and international humanitarian law. While that responsibility lies primarily with the official authorities, it also applies to the armed opposition and to any country directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. We repeat the request that was made in January to the Security Council by a group of countries, of which we are a member, to give the International Criminal Court the jurisdiction and authority to investigate those responsible for the worst crimes committed in Syria.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the decision as to how Syria should organize its Government and institutions lies only with the Syrian people.

Ms. Birananda (Thailand): Thailand has considered today's resolution (resolution 67/262) with the utmost care. We decided to vote in favour of it to show our deep concern about the worsening crisis in Syria. However, our support does not imply an endorsement of the entire text of the resolution. We have legitimate concerns about certain paragraphs. First, we strongly believe that the issue of legitimate representation can be determined only by the Syrian people through a free, fair and inclusive democratic election process. Secondly, our support for the resolution does not imply an endorsement of any act that violates the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We also believe that the crisis in Syria can be resolved only by peaceful means. We therefore call on all parties concerned to end the violence through non-violence.

Thailand reiterates its firm condemnation of the acts of violence committed against the innocent civilian population, which have so far resulted in more than 80,000 casualties and forced more than 1.5 million Syrians to take refuge in neighbouring countries. We are also deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. We therefore call on all parties to the conflict to provide safe and unhindered passage for humanitarian assistance to the affected population and help those in need obtain access to such assistance.

Given the magnitude of the crisis, the international community must put an end to the violence and actively support a peaceful political transition in Syria. In that context, we believe that any change in Syria should be inclusive, with the full participation of the Syrian people and respect for their human rights and dignity.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to emphasize two points that we consider particularly important: first, the importance of resolving the conflict through political dialogue and, secondly, the issue of responsibility for the crimes committed in Syria. Switzerland supports all diplomatic efforts aimed at upholding the legitimate aim of the Syrian people to end the violence. We especially welcome the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Secretary of State of the United States to organize an international conference with a view to finding a solution to the conflict. We also continue to fully support the political mission of Joint Special Representative Brahimi.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) calls for a political transition and the opening of a dialogue between credible representatives of the Government and the opposition. Switzerland supports this effort towards a concerted political solution; similarly, we welcome the creation of a national coalition and its goal of establishing a pluralistic and democratic Syria. We also welcome the resolution adopted by the League of Arab States calling for a political solution through dialogue. In Switzerland's view, however, the resolution is not equivalent to recognition of the national coalition; our position is that we recognize States, not Governments.

Abuses and violations of human rights and humanitarian law continue to be perpetrated by all parties to the conflict in Syria. Switzerland fully

endorses the firm condemnation of all such violations, as expressed in today's resolution, whoever the perpetrators are. If such criminal acts go unpunished, the violence will only increase. We should recall that when a country is unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators of international crimes, the international community has a responsibility to ensure that those crimes are prosecuted. The fight against impunity is an essential condition for establishing sustainable peace in Syria. Switzerland notes that the General Assembly mentions in the resolution the responsibility for the crimes committed in Syria and refers to international criminal justice as one of the means of addressing the issue. We are convinced that more explicit references to the International Criminal Court would better reflect the developments and positions in that regard.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court due to the massive violations that have been committed there and the total impunity that reigns in the country. All of the special procedures, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Human Rights Council Independent International Commission of Inquiry, in its latest report, have all called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Those calls were echoed in a letter dated 14 January to the Security Council by 58 States, in a joint statement read by the representative of Libya on behalf of 64 States during the interactive dialogue with the International Commission of Inquiry and, more recently, in Human Rights Council resolution 22/24, adopted on 22 March.

We welcome the decision of the General Assembly to call on the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry to brief the Assembly with a view to moving this discussion forward. We propose that that take place as soon as possible and that the Security Council also consider hearing a briefing from the Commission.

Mr. Aquino (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru voted in favour of resolution 67/262 based on the following considerations.

Faced with the gravity of the situation in Syria, Peru viewed it as indispensible to join our voice to the urgent call for the ending of all forms of violence being committed in that country, to reiterate the need to urgently tackle the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people and to lay the foundations for a Syrian-led political transition.

Peru has followed the crisis in Syria from the outset and has already condemned all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties. We have taken that position in all multilateral forums.

Our vote in favour of the resolution does not represent any sort of recognition or grant any legitimacy to the representation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, as it is for the Syrian people to grant any such recognition.

With regard to the welcoming of all of the resolutions of the League of Arab States on the situation in Syria, Peru would like to record its reservations on that reference.

Finally, Peru calls for the immediate cessation of violence and reaffirms its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Representative.

Mr. Dos Santos (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to give a very brief explanation of its abstention in the voting on resolution 67/262, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

The Republic of Paraguay attaches the utmost value to human rights, in keeping with its national Constitution and the international treaties and conventions to which it is party. In that regard, in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, we voted in favour of all previous resolutions relating to the situation in Syria, based on our concern at the acts of violence affecting the civilian population. Likewise, along with other delegations, we have supported initiatives relating to the human rights violations.

On this occasion, after giving it careful consideration, we decided to abstain in the voting because we believe that certain paragraphs of the text contradict clear principles set out in the Charter, primarily that of the non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

As it stands, we believe that the document will not contribute to bringing the parties closer in the pursuit of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict. We believe that the affairs and initiatives of the Organization must be in harmony with the principles set out in the Charter and should be reflected in practical, realistic, balanced and fair actions.

Paraguay reiterates that it will continue to support all initiatives on the part of the international community seeking to end the hostilities between the parties. Likewise, we also support all efforts relating to humanitarian assistance intended to meet the needs of the victims of the conflict and to attain lasting peace.

Mrs. Lalic Smajevic (Serbia): Serbia voted in favour of the text of resolution 67/262, with the understanding that all international efforts should aim solely at bringing an urgent end to the violence. Serbia fully supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of all disputes and underscores the need for a comprehensive political dialogue between all sides involved in the conflict, with the aim of achieving a sustainable political solution to the ongoing Syrian crisis through an inclusive Syrian-led political dialogue that would contribute to the stability of the region.

Serbia welcomes the announcement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Secretary of State of the United States of America in Moscow on 7 May regarding the understandings on ways ahead on the Syrian crisis based on the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) of 30 June 2012.

Miss Richards (Jamaica): The Government of Jamaica remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria, including the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, in particular women and children. We are indeed disheartened by the fact that the High Commissioner for Human Rights has estimated that the number of casualties is approaching 70,000, as well as the fact that there are approximately 1.2 million refugees and 1.4 million internally displaced persons. We are also mindful of the impact that the crisis in Syria is having on neighbouring countries.

There is an urgent need for a peaceful and consultative resolution of the situation in Syria to address the humanitarian and other crises. It should be based on an inclusive political process. Jamaica therefore maintains its support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and for the implementation by all parties of his transition plan aimed at arriving at a negotiated solution to the crisis. That is a democratic approach that should be based on dialogue among all parties and, most importantly, take into account the wishes of the Syrian people. We remain hopeful that the international conference to be held on Syria at the initiative of the United States and Russia will contribute to such a peaceful transition.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) reaffirms that approach and, more importantly, addresses the actions to be taken to address the dire humanitarian crisis. Jamaica remains of the view that the Government of Syria bears the primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens and for urgently addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis. We therefore call once again on the Government of Syria to take the necessary steps to alleviate the flow of refugees and the number of displaced persons and to offer protection to all of its nationals.

We are concerned, however, that the references in the resolution to political transition could be interpreted as providing international approval for the process in Syria to take a course of action other than that contemplated in the transition plan set forth in the final communiqué (A/66/865, annex) issued by the Action Group for Syria on 30 June 2012. The transition plan assures the safety of all in an atmosphere of stability and calm, provides for clear and irreversible steps in the transition according to a fixed time frame and establishes a consensus transitional governing body, among other measures.

Jamaica reiterates the importance of adhering to the principle outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. It is for this reason that Jamaica took the decision to abstain in the voting on the resolution. However, our abstention should not be interpreted in any way as disregard for the grave situation facing the people of Syria. We appeal for urgent and united action, including in the Security Council, in moving towards a political solution in Syria, and we echo the call for all parties, whether from the Government, opposition or Syrian people, to choose the path of dialogue to ensure peace.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The situation in Syria is one of the most pressing issues on the international agenda. The serious consequences unleashed by the conflict, including the distressing humanitarian implications and the deplorable lack of action by the Security Council to address the situation, make it imperative that the General Assembly take a decision on the issue and send a strong message to the players involved in the crisis.

Mexico voted for the resolution adopted earlier today (resolution 67/262) because we believe it is impossible

to remain unmoved by a crisis of this magnitude. We therefore welcome the initiative taken by the sponsors of the resolution. In particular, we acknowledge the important work of the delegation of Qatar in its outreach to regional groups aimed at addressing our concerns about the text. However, Mexico believes that the consultation process should have been carried out in a more open, transparent and inclusive manner, so that the proposals of all delegations could have been taken into account.

Although we strongly support the resolution, Mexico believes it is essential that the responsibility of both parties regarding the use of violence, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights be clearly spelled out. While it is true that the primary responsibility in this respect lies with the Syrian Government, we cannot ignore the reports submitted to the Human Rights Council, which, while listing the gross and systematic human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities, also show that armed the opposition groups are also endangering civilians by using civilian areas as military targets.

Mexico would also like to recall that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic also stated that there are sufficient grounds to believe that the armed opposition has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, just as Government forces have.

Given those facts, it is important that the international community ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice, in order to combat impunity and to contribute to lasting stability to the region.

I would like to highlight once again Mexico's opposition to further militarizing the conflict. On that basis, Mexico would have preferred that the text of the resolution had included a call for the international community to prevent the transfer of weapons and military equipment to any of the parties.

Finally, we stress that the Syrian people are the only ones who can determine their future, the most appropriate political solution to the conflict and who their legitimate representatives are.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia voted in favour of resolution 67/262 to further demonstrate its firm commitment to finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria and its rejection of all the forms of violence that have afflicted that country for the past 26 months. Through this resolution, measures are established to address the grave humanitarian situation and put an end to the violations of human rights and abuses.

We agree with the Geneva communiqué of 2012 (A/66/865, annex) that it is only through an inclusive political dialogue led by the Syrians themselves, in which the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of the population are taken into account, that it will possible to move towards a political transition that allows for the establishment of a genuine democratic system in the country. That was Colombia's unequivocal position throughout its participation in the Security Council over the past two years. We therefore reiterate our appeal for political consultation and an end to hostilities.

Although the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces is one of the interlocutors necessary for a political transition, Colombia believes that only the citizens of that country can determine who their legitimate representatives are. It is not up to the General Assembly to make declarations with regard to the legitimacy of peoples' representatives. In that regard, we believe that the adoption of this resolution does not give such recognition to any sector of the Syrian opposition.

The levels of violence in the country are unprecedented, and the level of oppression that has been exercised since the beginning by the Government of Mr. Al-Assad against the civilian population, who are calling for the free exercise of their fundamental rights, is unacceptable. The international community as a whole must therefore recognize that a military response is not an option. In that sense, Columbia believes that this resolution neither authorizes nor promotes measures aimed at providing weapons to the parties to the conflict.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): We would like to thank the sponsors of resolution 67/262 for once again bringing the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to the attention of the General Assembly. We believe this is an appropriate step to take, given the atrocious situation in the country and its destabilizing effect on the region and the fact that the Security Council is clearly not living up to its responsibility in that regard.

The resolution shows that the international community does not wish to remain silent in the face of the tragedy unfolding in Syria and its neighbouring

States. We appreciate the strong focus on the need for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, facilitate humanitarian aid and work towards a political solution.

We particularly look forward to the requested briefing to the General Assembly by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which we hope will take place soon and lead to an appropriate response by the Assembly.

At the same time, we wish to put on record our discomfort with the manner in which the text of the resolution was arrived at. Greater transparency is required for such a process within the General Assembly on a matter of such importance. We therefore hope that future consultations will be held in a more open and interactive manner.

We are also of the view that, with the adoption of the resolution, the General Assembly has missed an opportunity to make an unequivocal statement regarding the need for accountability for the atrocities committed in Syria. We believe that our proposals on the matter, which were not taken on board by the sponsors, would have considerably improved the text.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago abstained in the voting on resolution 67/262, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". In abstaining, however, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to put on record its abhorrence of the continuing widespread and systematic gross violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law on both sides of the conflict.

We are not unmindful of the sexual and other physical abuses against women, the inhuman suffering of Syrian children and the more than 1 million refugees and many more internally displaced persons who are suffering inhumanely as a result of the conflict, all of which is set forth in the resolution. We support the demands in the resolution calling on all parties to immediately put an end to all violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on civilians. Trinidad and Tobago also supports the calls in the resolution for an inclusive Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system in which citizens are equal regardless of their ethnicity, beliefs, colour, class, creed or race.

Trinidad and Tobago abstained in the voting on the resolution because we felt that Member States were not provided with adequate opportunities to comment on the draft text. We are also of the view that certain provisions of the resolution relating to political transitions are ambiguous. A resolution of this nature must be clear, precise, unambiguous and not subject to multiple interpretations that have the potential to undermine the noble efforts being made to address the human rights and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

It is the hope of Trinidad and Tobago that all parties to the conflict will come together to resolve their differences in the interests of peace, good governance and the future well-being of the long-suffering Syrian people.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union supported the resolution on Syria that was adopted today by the General Assembly (resolution 67/262) and which underlines once again the urgency of finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria in which more than 80,000 people have lost their lives. The crisis has brought unspeakable suffering to the people of Syria and has already gone beyond the country's borders, gravely destabilizing the whole region. In that regard, we recall once again the need to respect the sovereignty and integrity of neighbouring States and we condemn all related infringements committed by State and non-State actors alike. The European Union also reiterates its attachment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

The European Union has consistently supported the vision of the political settlement outlined in the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and we fully welcome and support the joint call made by United States Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to convene an international peace conference on Syria as soon as possible, as a follow up to the Geneva Conference of June 2012. Bringing the two sides to the negotiating table is the only way that the political process can be set into motion. The EU is ready to assist all efforts in that direction in any way possible. We hope that the two sides will exercise flexibility so as to start the dialogue soon and that that will be the beginning of a true peace process. It is imperative that the process be Syrian-led and that the interlocutors be truly empowered to implement on the ground whatever decisions are made. We also reaffirm our full support to Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and we call on all parties to cooperate with him.

The European Union has welcomed the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which we accept as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. The Coalition is an effective representative interlocutor, as today's resolution points out, which is very much needed for a political transition. It is of the utmost importance that all Syrian opposition forces act in a united manner towards a democratic transition in Syria in the inclusive framework of the Syrian Opposition Coalition. We are committed to continuing to support the Coalition in its efforts to become more inclusive, to remain committed to respecting the principles of human rights, inclusiveness and democracy and to engage with all opposition groups and all sectors of Syrian civil society. At this crucial juncture in the crisis, we welcome the acceptance by the Coalition of the principle of a political process under credible conditions and we urge the Coalition to seize the opportunity created by the American and Russian initiative.

The European Union is appalled by the dire humanitarian situation in Syria and by its impact on neighbouring countries, which, as recent discussions in the Security Council have shown, is clearly becoming a threat to international peace and security. We are particularly grateful to the Governments and the peoples of Syria's neighbouring countries for the generosity they have shown in dealing with the crisis and we are committed to continuing to be the leading humanitarian donor in the context of the Syrian conflict, as part of a wider international response. In that context, we call on Member States to honour the pledges they have made, most recently at the Kuwait Conference.

Today's resolution makes a number of important demands to deal with the humanitarian crisis and, in particular, to ensure safe and timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting. We join in the call by once again urging the regime in Damascus to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance by whatever routes are most effective in order to reach all the population in need, including across borders, and to allow a broader scope of humanitarian actors to work in Syria.

The European Union strongly condemns the widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, while recalling that the Syrian regime bears the primary responsibility for the ongoing violence. We call on all parties to the conflict to commit to their obligation to abide by international humanitarian law, including the protection of medical facilities, staff and patients, and hold to account those in their ranks who do not. The European Union reaffirms that there should be no impunity for any such violations and abuses and recalls that the Security Council can, at any time, refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, as requested in the Swiss letter to the Security Council of 14 January 2013. We have repeatedly called on the Security Council to urgently address all aspects of the situation in Syria, including that issue. The European Union also calls on all parties to the conflict to respect Syria's cultural heritage and all its religious sites, and we condemn attacks against spiritual leaders of all religions and denominations.

The European Union remains extremely concerned by allegations that chemical weapons may have been used in Syria. We emphasize that any use of chemical weapons, whether by a State or a non-State actor, is abhorrent and must be unreservedly condemned. It is important that a clear message be sent today to demand that the Syrian authorities strictly observe their obligations under international law with respect to chemical and biological weapons and refrain from using or transferring any chemical and biological weapons or any related material.

The European Union expresses its full support for the decision of the Secretary-General to determine the facts in relation to the allegations of the use of chemical weapons. It is important that all parties cooperate fully with the investigation and permit unfettered access to the investigation team. The safety and security of chemical weapons stockpiles must also be ensured,

pending independently verified destruction under the supervision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The General Assembly has sent an important message today that the European Union fully supports. Now is the time for action and now is the time to move forward towards a genuine political transition in Syria that makes a clear break with the past and that finally brings about a civil, democratic and pluralistic Syria where all citizens are equal regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): For the record, before I begin my statement, I would like to mention a procedural matter regarding the list of speakers. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/314, the Holy See has the right to speak immediately after Member States, and I should therefore have been given the floor immediately after the last Member State on the list.

With the General Assembly's adoption of today's resolution on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (resolution 67/262), I wish once again to express the grave concern with which the Holy See has been following the unceasing spiral of violence that has overwhelmed Syria for more than two years now, and to recall the words of Pope Francis during his Urbi et Orbi message on Easter Sunday: How much blood has been shed — and how much suffering must there still be before a political solution to the crisis will be found?

With the parties still engaged in combat, it is a priority that those in a position to influence the parties to the conflict call on them to immediately end the bloodbath and continual violations of human rights, which only open the door to further retaliation and recrimination. If we wish to reconstitute a peaceable society and avoid abandoning the Syrian people to a violent and uncertain future, a clear change of course is needed.

It is to be hoped that the outcome of today's discussion will constitute a step leading to the Syrian-led political dialogue that all parties are calling for but that still seems all too far away. Only through the involvement of all political parties and the various components of civil society, including representatives of the various religious groups that constitute the beautiful and ancient mosaic of the Syrian landscape, can we aspire to provide solutions and offer hope for the reconstruction of the social fabric and State institutions for a rebuilt Syria. That rebuilding must be based on the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance of public affairs, together with respect for Syria's diverse ethnic and religious identities.

The sad statistics of the humanitarian catastrophe enveloping Syria are well known. Only a few weeks ago the heads of the major United Nations humanitarian agencies briefed the Security Council about this. My delegation therefore feels that it is particularly urgent to appeal to the international community to act in support, even financially, of those agencies and the countries that, commendably, are welcoming those fleeing the fighting. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a collapse of the most fragile of those countries would produce an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with extremely severe repercussions for the entire international community. What matter here are not acts of mere generosity, but acts that can generate and sustain peace, security and the common good of the entire international community.

It is necessary, furthermore, that the warring parties acknowledge their obligations with respect to international humanitarian law, particularly by guaranteeing humanitarian-aid workers immediate and safe access to the neediest. In that regard, my delegation calls for the protection of health-care institutions — whether they be deliberately attacked or suffering due to the indiscriminate effects of armed violence — both when health-care workers are not assured of the necessary freedom and serenity to accomplish their missions and when they are forced to contravene their professional ethics by refusing care for any wounded without distinction.

In conclusion, the Holy See, having no interests other than the genuine hope to see an end to every act of violence against the people of Syria — among whom, and of particular concern, are some of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating back to the first century — desires that all Syrians may return once again to the peaceful and harmonious coexistence that has been the hallmark of Syrian society for centuries. In that regard, my delegation takes this opportunity to appeal for the international community's assistance in securing the earliest possible release of the innocent

victims of kidnapping by armed groups, who include two Metropolitan Bishops, Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church and Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church, who still remain in the hands of their abductors.

Before the judgement of history and anyone of goodwill, it behooves all individuals and State or international institutions to help bring a close to this painful chapter of Syrian history once and for all, and to find a lasting solution worthy of the dignity of the people of that great nation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bahamas, who also wished to speak in explanation of vote after the voting.

Mr. Newry (Bahamas): The Bahamas solemnly shares the international community's collective alarm and outrage at the violence, bloodshed and turmoil that the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has inflicted, and continues to inflict, daily on that country's people, particularly the civilian population.

The resolution adopted today (resolution 67/262) includes many constructive elements that the Bahamas certainly supports. We readily add our voice to the call for an immediate end to all violations of international humanitarian law. We share the alarm at and condemnation of the grave violations of human rights, including those of women and children, by the perpetrators of sexual and physical abuse. We also fully agree on the need to address the plight of the millions of internally displaced persons and those who are now refugees. All those categories of Syrian citizens in particular are unjustly bearing the cost of this crisis in a currency of death, loss and suffering.

The Bahamas also shares the appreciation for the assistance given by neighbouring countries, and we welcome the resolution's reaffirmation of support for the mission of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative, the efforts of the League of Arab States on behalf of Syria,and, indeed, for all diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful solution.

While we do not consider the resolution to be as balanced as it could have been, we believe that overall it provides support for the people of Syria. Our vote in favour does not support any violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as they relate to non-interference in a country's internal affairs. We again urge both sides in this matter to choose the way of peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We wish to conclude by reiterating in the strongest terms our belief that to halt the mounting death toll and hostilities is a task that must remain at the heart and in the hands of the General Assembly. It is for those reasons that the Bahamas voted in favour of the resolution.

We also wish to echo the remark made by the observer of the Holy See regarding the procedural anomalies regarding the list of speakers, which will hopefully be avoided in future.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): While my delegation regrets the adoption of this prejudiced and unbalanced resolution (resolution 67/262) for the reasons I explained in my statement before the voting, we wish to thank all of those States that did not vote in favour of it for their responsible stance in support of the principles of the United Nations and the provisions of international law.

It is gratifying indeed that the majority of statements delivered this morning prior to the voting (see A/67/PV.80) were positive in their essence and reasonable in their approach, exposing the true intentions of some sponsors of the resolution. Only two or three delegations deviated from that approach. Their statements reflected their capitals' wishes to perpetuate, exacerbate and impede any consensual political solution to the Syrian crisis. Moreover, to take such a public stance goes against the growing international support for a consensual Syrian political solution that satisfies the interests, demands and aspirations of the Syrian people. Based on our belief in such a political solution and our desire to preserve the interests of our people, we will not fall into the trap of provocation and wrangling; rather, we will deal with the essence of the question with the utmost responsibility as a nation.

The low level of support for the resolution voted on at the end of the morning meeting and the increasing number of States that opposed it as compared to the previous resolution point to the growing international understanding of the dimensions and characteristics of what is transpiring in Syria: external interference, the sponsoring of terrorism, growing radicalization and the rejection of dialogue. We hope that the United Nations and its Member States will support Syria and its people in countering the culture of radicalism and terrorism,

and in encouraging comprehensive national dialogue towards the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

At the same time, we expect the United Nations and its Member States to read the road map of current events closely, free from the influence of certain interested parties, both within the region and beyond, in a manner that preserves the principles of international law and the aspirations of the Syrian people to live in dignity in their homeland. The pain our people are suffering matters more than the designs of those who trade in such pain, bloodshed, terrorism, radicalism and collaboration.

I should like to share some remarks with the Assembly in refutation of a number of misleading allegations and statements we have heard.

It should be realized that despite the fact that Qatar introduced the resolution, we are all well aware that the text was not Qatari and that that country was only used as a tool for implementation. It is no secret that the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey persist in financing transnational jihadist terrorism. Joint Special Representative Brahimi, in his most recent briefing to the Security Council, stated that there were some 40,000 foreign terrorists present in Syria contributing to the bloodshed. Among those, there were more than 1,000 Takfiri-Salafist Europeans who belong to Al-Qaida.

In my statement this morning I noted that the Qatari intelligence services had been involved in kidnapping members of the Filipino battalion working as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. I also stated that senior officials in the Secretariat were well aware of that atrocious crime. It was therefore quite strange that the Secretary-General expressed his "appreciation for assistance from Qatar and others involved in securing their safe release". We must ask how Qatar can have such considerable influence on terrorist groups that abducted peacekeepers, if not for its considerable involvement with those groups. To what extent does the position of the Secretariat correspond with the Qatari involvement in abducting peacekeepers and endangering their lives? Who will hold the Qatari authorities responsible for their rashness?

Perhaps my colleague the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia misheard the contents of my statement. I therefore refer him to read the statement again; it is available in English and Arabic. In that connection, I would like to state that the Saudi representative was wrong in two respects. First, he presented an erroneous account of what is going on in my country. That is no surprise, given the full involvement of his country's authorities in terrorism and in exacerbating the situation in Syria. The second mistake was his attribution to me of words that I never uttered. The conclusions he drew from those words were therefore erroneous, corresponding with his erroneous reading.

I would like to remind my colleagues here that the French delegation has blocked the Security Council from issuing many press releases condemning terrorist acts perpetrated by armed terrorist groups linked with Al-Qaida, acts which have killed thousands of innocent Syrians, just as they blocked the issuance of a press release that condemned the attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister of the Syrian Government. That is unprecedented hypocrisy on the part of the Government of France. How can it claim to engage in a war against terrorist groups linked with Al-Qaida in the Sahel and at the same time encourage, sponsor and support the activities of the same terrorist groups in Syria?

Over a year ago, French security forces killed a French terrorist of Moroccan origin named Mohammed Merah. To assassinate that terrorist, they called on 3,000 top intelligence agents, and they riddled his body with thousands of bullets. Today, the French representative, speaking off the cuff, claimed that the Syrian Government attacks its people. If combatting terrorism in France is lawful, combatting terrorism anywhere else is lawful. We in Syria are fighting the same terrorism that the French Government is fighting on its territory. France's hypocrisy is thus exposed and should be clear to anyone who believes in the provisions of international law.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 33.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.81

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

81st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 15 May 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Adhikari (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.45 p.m.

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Agenda item 103 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Mrs. Hrdá (Czech Republic): Let me first congratulate the organizers and facilitators of this meeting for their efforts. I would like to stress that combating human trafficking is a major challenge for today's globalized world. We would like to emphasize that the Czech Republic pays special attention to this topic and highly appreciates the systematic activities at the international level in this regard.

We also align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77).

Since 2003, this area has become a priority within our fight against organized crime, when a special programme on support and protection for victims of trafficking of human beings was developed by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Currently, the programme focuses on all types of victims, regardless of the form of exploitation. In addition, the Czech Ministerial Coordination Group was established in 2008 and serves as a platform for information exchange and coordination activities in the area of the fight against the trafficking in persons at the national level. Members of this Group, including non-governmental and governmental organizations, also contribute to an annual status report and comment on strategic documents in this regard.

Last year, the Czech Republic adopted a new strategic document for the period 2012-2015, called "The National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the Czech Republic". It sets out a number of measures in the area of trafficking in persons, focusing on, among other things, a description of the situation in socially excluded areas, systematic education in the area of trafficking, the ratification of important international instruments and evaluation of the special programme on support and protection for victims.

The ratification of international instruments in the area of trafficking in persons, including the protocols to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was one of the measures defined in the strategy. Since the main obstacle to their ratification was recently removed, and the concept of the criminal liability of a legal person has been introduced into the Czech legal system, the Czech Republic is now able to ratify these instruments and join a number of other States showing their interest in combating trafficking in persons.

Mrs. Byaje (Rwanda): I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for convening this important meeting. I also take this opportunity to thank

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for his commitment to this critical issue, and to commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012*.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/67/PV.77). We also pleased the Secretary-General's reports on trafficking in women and girls, and we hope that their recommendations will create an impetus and focus for our systems to continue the fight against human trafficking and close the gaps exploited by criminals.

Rwanda values these high-level meetings on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, mostly because they present an opportunity for self-appraisal, peer-to-peer evaluation and the sharing of best practices. We call upon Member States to use this opportunity to assess achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

In Rwanda, human trafficking is a new offense in the Rwandan criminal justice system . It emerged as a threat in 2009, when this type of crime started to be reported in police stations. Since 2009, a total of 130 cases of human trafficking have been recorded in Rwanda. Those include cases of victims who have been recovered or intercepted, and others who are still in the hands of criminals.

Investigations and research in Rwanda have revealed that the most targeted group is young females between the ages of 16 and 22, especially those from vulnerable groups, such as orphans, and from low-income families. In March 2013, Rwanda National Police intercepted a foreign agent in Rwanda who had recruited 12 young genocide orphans by promising them work and the opportunity to study abroad.

The modus operandi used by traffickers differs according to the category of the victim. In some cases, traffickers, through their local agents, approach financially vulnerable girls offering them work or other fascinating opportunities. We have also encountered a few cases where traffickers use offers of marriage as a means of attracting their victims for sexual exploitation or cheap forced labour.

Combatting the crime of trafficking in persons is possible but challenging, given its transboundary nature. Rwanda believes that forums like this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons could be used to enhance the readiness for collaboration of States, especially neighbouring States and States of destination.

The other challenge is that the crime of trafficking often goes unreported because its victims are too frightened to give evidence. Nevertheless, Rwanda has received considerable law enforcement personnel support from around the world that has brought human trafficking offenders to justice and enabled the recovery of Rwandan human trafficking victims.

Over the years, it has been observed that continued awareness of and education on the indicators of human trafficking have led to increased intervention and arrests. The Government of Rwanda has therefore established, equipped and staffed the division of criminal investigations of transnational organized crime of the Rwanda National Police with competent officers to investigate and lay out strategies to combat that crime.

The INTERPOL office in Kigali, in partnership with the regional bureau in Nairobi, conducts joint operations targeting human trafficking. In August 2012, an operation code-named Operation Hope, which targeted human trafficking in Rwanda, was conducted in the East African community, and uncovered networks of organized criminals recruiting young girls in Rwanda.

Additionally, awareness programmes have been used in Rwanda as a measure aimed at fighting human trafficking. In many cases, victims are unaware of the tactics used by traffickers. Legislation on human trafficking has also been reviewed and amended accordingly to suit the current trends of this crime. Plans are under way also to set up a national task force on human trafficking. More importantly, the Government of Rwanda has recognized the importance of coordinating efforts across agencies, including working with new partners, such as non-governmental organizations dedicated to combating human trafficking and various other services.

Rwanda is in agreement with the assessment that trafficking in human beings is increasingly becoming a global scourge affecting all countries and regions around the world. As the Group of African States has well stated, increased poverty, unemployment, inequality,

social exclusion, marginalization and racism are among factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons and contribute to exploitative conditions. Governments and subregional and regional bodies have a high calling not only to fight traffickers and liberate those already caught in the web of trafficking, but also to establish an environment that kills those criminal activities at the roots, and lay strategies and mechanisms that address issues of poverty, social exclusion, migration systems, unemployment and armed conflict, among others.

In conclusion, Rwanda reiterates its obligation to implement, where relevant, the commitments made by world leaders on transnational crime at the Millennium Summit and the 2005 World Summit, through the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), and the commitments made by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Governments through the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children.

We pledge to continue our cooperation and partnership with States and Governments and the world community in the fight against this scourge.

Mrs. Zografska-Krsteska (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): The adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 opened new possibilities for concerted action against that scourge. We have gathered at this high-level meeting to see how far we have come to put in place national legislation that reflect our commitments and legal obligations stipulated in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and other relevant instruments; how rigorously we have implemented them and how successful we have been in countering trafficking in persons. The conclusions drawn from this event, built upon the analysis and statistics of the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, issued last December, will guide our future work at the global, regional and national levels.

The Republic of Macedonia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77), and on this occasion I would like to present additional observations in my national capacity.

Combating trafficking by employing human rights-based policies and actions is high on the agenda of the Government. That dedication is reflected in the work of the National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, an inter-agency body established in 2001 and entrusted with coordinating activities in that domain. A subgroup for combating trafficking in children has operated within the National Commission since 2003. The scope of work of the Commission has been extended to cover not only activities to combat trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but also a wider range of activities, including labour exploitation, begging and forced marriages.

The Commission issued the National Strategy and Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration for the period 2013-2016 as its third consecutive strategic document. Both documents are in line with the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016. Also, both documents were based on accumulated experience in the implementation of previous policies and measures, thereby providing the logical continuation in combating trafficking in persons and illegal migration and the needed upgrade for the elimination of identified gaps. The technical expertise provided by the German Society for International Cooperation in drafting the documents was very valuable. We take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the Society and other partners that assisted us in this effort.

The key novelties in the National Strategy and Action Plan are a strong emphasis on preventive measures to address the root causes of trafficking in persons; the economic empowerment of vulnerable groups and the facilitation of their access to the labour market; and greater attention by social services to vulnerable groups and potential victims of trafficking. Other novelties, inter alia, include the promotion of awareness-raising campaigns with a view to reducing the demand that fosters the exploitation of persons, as well as a strengthening of the existing referral mechanism within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The evolving nature of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons requires new legal and institutional approaches. That reality prompted the amendment of the Criminal Code of the Republic

of Macedonia by introducing more severe criminal sanctions for perpetrators. At the same time, the number of prosecutions and convictions has increased. A trend in longer sentences is noticeable as well.

Addressing the problem of trafficking successfully correlates to strengthening the capacities of, inter alia, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, members of the judiciary, border control officers and labour inspectors. By amending the laws on public prosecutors and on courts and introducing a new law on criminal procedure, new incentives have been created for increasing the efficiency and quality of investigations and ensuring better collection of evidence against the perpetrators. The academy for training judges and public prosecutors provides training on the use of special investigative measures and on the implementation of the legal provisions on witness protection in proceedings in cases of trafficking in persons and illegal immigration.

The aim of strengthening the cooperation and coordination in combating human trafficking between central and local levels is contained in our new strategic National Action Plan. The next phase will therefore be characterized by the creation of institutional structures at the local level, including mobile teams for identification, assistance and support for potential victims and groups at risk. The Macedonian Government has allocated 9.3 million denars, the equivalent of $200,000, in its budget for the implementation of the National Action Plan.

With the foregoing, we have pointed out just a few of the many activities that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has undertaken to combat human trafficking in cooperation with civil society, private sector, international organizations and all other relevant stakeholders. We will continue to work hard to strengthen cooperation among all stakeholders at the global, regional and local levels and exchange experiences and best practices to eradicate trafficking in persons.

No human being should be treated as a commodity or be subject to exploitation. Let us make sure that becomes the omnipresent reality.

Mr. De Vega (Philippines): The Philippines welcomes the holding of this high-level meeting to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. A few months ago, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes launched the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* here in New York. The *Report* was made to provide information about human trafficking patterns and flows pursuant to the mandate given by resolution 64/293, adopting the Global Plan of Action, which called for an increased knowledge base with regard to trafficking in persons in order to facilitate the creation and implementation of evidence-based programmatic interventions.

The Philippines recognizes the importance of enhancing current knowledge on trafficking in persons in its national and transnational manifestations. The scourge of human trafficking is a complex issue and a global phenomenon that must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. By monitoring the international dynamics of trafficking, we gain a greater understanding of the global trends in trafficking in persons that will help us identify better ways and means to combat the global scourge.

On the domestic front, the fight against human trafficking has resulted in tighter monitoring by concerned Government agencies in the Philippines. The Philippines recently passed the expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. That law provides for strengthened prosecution of those who engage or attempt to engage in human trafficking; it also provides for protection for trafficked victims.

The Philippine Government significantly increased funding for our Interagency Council against Trafficking from the equivalent of approximate $230,000 in 2010 to the equivalent of $1.5 million in 2011 and the equivalent of over $2.3 million in 2012. The interagency approach we have set up in the Philippines represents not only the power of partnership and collaboration with both the public and private sectors, but also the determination and collective will of the various stakeholders to overcome obstacles in combating modern day slavery.

The Government continues to prosecute and convict trafficking offenders and has implemented a new programme to protect and rehabilitate victims. Additionally, authorities continue to make efforts to address trafficking-related corruption. We have filed criminal cases against at least 18 officials in 2012. The Government has also made notable efforts to prevent trafficking, including through training public officials, strengthening and expanding structures to screen for trafficking indicators, before Filipino migrant workers depart for overseas, and negotiating bilateral agreements to protect our workers employed in foreign countries.

Human trafficking is clearly a crime that knows no borders. The Philippines maintains its active engagement in regional and global cooperation to end human trafficking. We have been deeply involved in the 2002 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime, which has a comprehensive programme of action specific to trafficking in persons, and the 2004 ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children. Just last month, the Philippines hosted a two-day experts working group meeting to develop a draft ASEAN convention and regional plan of action against trafficking in persons. The draft convention aims to facilitate cooperation among ASEAN member States to prevent and combat human trafficking in the region, paying particular attention to women, children and economic and cultural minorities, protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, and ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers.

On the multilateral front, the Philippines is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In addition to our activities as a proud member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, which is ably led by Belarus, and as a sponsor of the Global Plan of Action, we have spearheaded a number of Philippine-led initiatives at the United Nations, particularly our biennial resolution on trafficking in women and girls. We have also given a token contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking in 2011; we are one of only 12 countries that made such a contribution to the Trust Fund.

We are gathered here to take stock of the progress made in the fight against trafficking and to reaffirm our commitment to taking concrete action to intensify our efforts to combat the global scourge by strengthening our capacity to identify victims of trafficking in persons, enhancing efforts to investigate alleged cases, strengthening means to combat trafficking, prosecuting perpetrators and investigating, prosecuting and punishing corrupt officials who engage in or facilitate trafficking in persons. All our initiatives to combat trafficking, however, need resources to enable us to achieve our objectives. Our commitment must be translated into action and tangible results. We therefore encourage Member States to contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund, which enables Governments and all stakeholders to partner with each other to directly and meaningfully help trafficking victims, especially women and children. It is only through strong commitment and partnership that we can help bring an end to human trafficking.

Finally, allow us to convey our appreciation to the safekeepers of the Fund who are working hard to ensure that the funds are used for actually assisting victims of trafficking.

Ms. Boissiere (Trinidad and Tobago): The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the global fight against trafficking in persons and has made a number of efforts to that end. We therefore welcome the opportunity to participate in this high-level meeting to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and we thank the President for organizing such an important event. We are also grateful to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their contributions.

Trinidad and Tobago signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols in 2001, and ratified those instruments in November 2007. The Government subsequently approved the implementation of an action plan to counter human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago. These and other actions undertaken by the Government to combat trafficking in persons are in keeping with the provisions of the Global Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly in 2010.

While Trinidad and Tobago had criminal provisions related to one or more elements of the trafficking process — such as procurement, forced detention, prostitution, sexual offences, kidnapping, and abduction — its lack of specific anti-trafficking legislation hindered its ability to effectively implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Trafficking Protocol. There were also challenges relating to accurately identifying and assisting victims of trafficking, and identifying and prosecuting the various actors who engage in trafficking.

In recognition of this, a multisectoral task force was appointed to develop a policy framework to inform the drafting of legislation that would put the Trafficking in Persons Protocol into effect. A bill on trafficking in persons was debated and passed unanimously in Parliament in June 2011, and the act was proclaimed

operational on 2 January 2013, effectively criminalizing trafficking in persons, including children, and imposing severe penalties on those engaged in such activities. The act adopts a victim-centred approach, availing them of numerous social benefits and avenues for restitution.

On 11 January, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago established a counter-trafficking unit responsible for the country's day-to-day counter-trafficking response operations and, specifically, for addressing all matters related to human trafficking, including investigating cases, screening, identifying, protecting and assisting victims, and raising public awareness about the crime and its prevention.

Since the national trafficking-in-persons act also mandates the counter-trafficking unit to raise public awareness, to begin this process three sessions were convened to sensitize members of the judiciary — magistrates and High Court judges — to the issue of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and global levels. Various initiatives have also been launched, including with the assistance of relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to raise national awareness about the issue. For example, this year the Ministries of National Security and Gender, Youth and Child Development joined with the Caribbean Umbrella Body for Restorative Behaviour in hosting one such programme, for which the theme was "Redefining male excellence: keeping the promise to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls, focused on ending the demand for sexual services". We recognize that training and sensitizing the relevant actors are critical elements in combating trafficking in persons, so other key agencies, such as the Immigration Division and the police service, have included in their curriculums the training of staff to recognize the indicators of trafficking in persons and take appropriate action.

While identifying and rescuing victims from a life of abuse and exploitation is of the utmost importance, providing appropriate care for victims and helping them reintegrate cannot be overemphasized. Beginning with the Ministry of National Security and the Immigration Division in previous years, and continuing with the counter-trafficking unit since its formation, these bodies have been partnering with the NGO community and the International Organization for Migration to provide holistic care for victims of trafficking, including comfortable shelter, communication with their families and consular representation.

Although Trinidad and Tobago has been working steadfastly to combat this modern form of slavery, it recognizes that no Government or agency can address the issue single-handedly. This crime is a cross-cutting, cross-border offence that requires a collaborative approach. In that regard, and to strengthen action being taken at the national level to address this scourge, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes engagement with partners in overcoming the various challenges involved. As a small island State, we encounter challenges in ensuring the provision of appropriate shelter for both male and female victims, as well as adequate protection for them, acquiring a better understanding of male victims' needs, providing relevant language services and interpreters for victims, and providing substantive training in the area of investigating and prosecuting crimes of trafficking in persons. They are all fundamental if we are to generate an effective response to the issue.

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and all stakeholders engaged in fighting this nefarious activity. We also wish to express our particular appreciation to the International Organization for Migration for its continuing assistance at the national level with, among other things, awareness-raising and training programmes and the rescue and resettlement of victims.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its resolve to continue to take action at the national level and to engage with the relevant authorities and stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to vigorously combat the crime of trafficking in persons and effectively address the needs of victims, including through further implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the relevant instruments.

Ms. Shiolashvili (Georgia): Georgia welcomes this high-level meeting as a good opportunity to discuss the achievements and challenges presented by implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I would also like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Georgia has undertaken energetic measures to suppress human trafficking and to help prevent it by conducting a wide public-awareness campaign. In order to meet the requirements of the first three

P's — prevention, protection and prosecution — we have undertaken active measures at both the legislative and executive levels, while there has been efficient use of the fourth P, partnership, throughout the process. In 2006 Georgia ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, introduced to supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and in the same year we ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Georgia's criminal code does not differentiate between trafficking in persons for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation. The code covers both internal and transnational forms of human trafficking, and transporting a victim outside the country is considered an aggravated form of the crime. At the same time, people who cross State borders illegally or produce, purchase or use forged documents are exempt from criminal liability if they committed those crimes because they were victims of trafficking in persons.

Our law on combating trafficking in persons emphasizes the State's determination to suppress human trafficking and is based on the relevant internationally recognized standards. It determines the organizational and legal grounds for preventing and combating human trafficking, the purview and obligations of State agencies and public officials, as well as legal entities, and it identifies the procedure for coordinating the activities of the various State bodies. On that basis, the following activities have been undertaken.

We have created a State fund for protecting and assisting victims; established a shelter for victims; created a permanent inter-agency coordination council for implementing measures against trafficking in persons; created a unified database on traffickers; laid down uniform standards and rules for identifying victims; formulated and put into practice guidelines for protecting victims; and determined the rules that provide compensation to victims from the State fund.

The anti-trafficking information campaign and the large-scale educational activities conducted by the Georgian Government, in cooperation with international organizations and local non-governmental organizations, also contribute to both the prevention of trafficking in persons and the prosecution of those responsible, as well as to the protection of the victims thereof. In particular, a number of trainings have been conducted for the following target groups: judges and prosecutors, high school teachers, officials of the relevant ministries, representatives of the Office of the Public Defender and the media.

Issues related to this topic are included in the various curriculums throughout the country. These vary from the curriculums of high schools to the curriculums of law enforcement bodies. In addition, the staff of law enforcement agencies regularly participate in a number of trainings organized under the auspices of various international and local non-governmental organizations. Other activities include the broadcasting of public service announcements and television and radio programmes, the preparation and dissemination of print information material, and the holding of public discussions.

Special attention is paid to the prosecution of traffickers. There are specialized investigators and prosecutors working on the trafficking cases. The law enforcement authorities regularly report on the prosecution of the cases of trafficking in persons to the Interagency Coordination Council. Anti-human trafficking activities planned by the Georgian Government for 2013-2014 encompass four main goals. Equal attention is given to preventing such crimes and to protecting the victims, prosecuting offenders and forming partnerships in all the endeavours.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm Georgia's commitment to addressing human trafficking in a comprehensive manner by continuing to work with all regional and international actors in this regard.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): Today's meeting presents the international community with an opportunity not only to assess the progress achieved since the adoption in 2010 of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, but also to renew our commitment to working together and to condemning in one voice the abhorrent and immoral practice of trafficking in human beings.

The Global Plan of Action has provided the United Nations with a resource for working together to combat all forms of human trafficking and for ensuring that confronting human trafficking remains one of the top issues of concern to the international community. However, such political commitment

must be backed by concrete actions on the ground so as to ensure that victims are freed from this repugnant form of contemporary slavery and given the necessary assistance to rebuild their lives.

The mobility of people across national boundaries is a human experience affecting all countries and regions of the world. It is a reality which presents opportunities to foster greater understanding among peoples and jointly to improve the social and economic well-being of migrants and their families. For too many, however, the reality of migration is no longer a matter of free choice, but rather has become a necessity. This sense of desperation provides human traffickers with the opportunity to prey on migrants and has contributed to making human trafficking one of the fastest-growing and most lucrative criminal activities in the world today.

Trafficking in persons constitutes a shameful crime against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. Those who commit such crimes debase themselves and poison human soiidarity. People are never to be used or treated as instruments for unscrupulous profit-mongering by being forced into slavery, which always constitutes an affront to the dignity of human nature and to the fundamental values shared by humankind.

Effective juridical instruments are crucial for ending this abominable trade in human beings, to prosecute its profiteers, and to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of its victims. To that end, the creation under the Global Plan of Action of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, provides a tangible means for ensuring support for those who suffer the dehumanizing impact of being trafficked.

While political, social and legal protections are indispensable for combating the scourge of human trafficking, we must also work to address those societal factors that foster the environment that makes human trafficking possible. One such overriding factor is the increasing commodification of human life. Such commodification can be seen in the women and girls who are trafficked each year for the sole purpose of making money from the sale of their bodies. There is indeed an urgent need here to challenge lifestyles and models of behaviour, in particular with regard to the image of women, which have generated what has become a veritable industry of sexual exploitation.

Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation accounts for 58 per cent of all cases reported globally, and demonstrates how increased demand fuels this market for human slavery and tolerates its immense human costs. It is a grim reminder that prostitution and consumers of so-called sexual services not only contribute to the trafficking of women and girls, but also disrespect their human dignity.

The commodification of human beings unfortunately does not lie solely in the realm of sexual exploitation, but can also be seen in unrelenting consumerist tendencies that demand more for less without due regard for the rights of workers. Around the world, forced labour accounts for more than a quarter of the victims of trafficking. This is a stark reminder that participating in a globalized economy requires adequate regulations to ensure that the qualitative, subjective value of human work is given precedence over purely quantifiable, objective product. In so doing, we can help to foster a deeper and richer ethical understanding of the value and dignity of human labour, and fashion economic and social systems that respect human rights.

Addressing human trafficking will remain an elusive goal if the courage to address the dark reality of consumerism feeding the exploitation of vulnerable human beings is lacking. In that regard, it is necessary to recognize that it is extreme poverty which often drives those who desire a better future into the hands of those preying upon the vulnerability of the poor and the defenceless. These individuals, prompted by a genuine desire to provide for themselves and their needy families, too easily become the unsuspecting victims of those who make false promises of a better future in another country or community.

Our efforts to address human trafficking are inherently linked, therefore, to our shared determination to eradicate poverty and address the lack of equal economic opportunity. That link recognizes that economic poverty inherently opens the door to exclusion and exploitation by those whose moral and spiritual poverty allows them to see people in need no longer as brothers and sisters to be respected, protected and cared for, but merely as a means to an end.

The Holy See, through its Catholic institutions and agencies around the world, is providing assistance, care and support to thousands of survivors of human trafficking. These institutions and their courageous individual workers place themselves in harm's way on a

daily basis to help those who have fallen victim to this modern plague of human trafficking. Many of these individuals have paid dearly in their endeavours to provide assistance to victims or expose the victimizers. The Holy See regards today's debate and assessment of the Global Plan of Action as a good opportunity to reinvigorate our efforts to address the evil of human trafficking so that men and women who fall prey to such trafficking will know that we stand in solidarity with them and that we will not cease in our efforts to ensure that today's victims of human trafficking become tomorrow's survivors.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution, 33/18 of 10 November 1978, and decision 53/453, of 18 December 1998, I now call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Savadogo (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): The International Organization of la Francophonie welcomes the commitment with which the General Assembly and Member States have been working to eradicate the insidious form of slavery that is human trafficking. I would particularly like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the coordinator States for their useful contributions to the debate.

Not a day goes by without the scourge of slavery affecting men and women from around the globe. La Francophonie is therefore fully committed to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As human trafficking knows no borders, neither should we, and within la Francophonie we keep track of the commitment of our member States to eradicate this ubiquitous phenomenon. Therefore, the ongoing efforts of francophone countries, together with those of all Member States, should be not only welcomed, but also consolidated.

Of the countless victims of human trafficking, some 60 per cent are women and children. This attack on fundamental rights requires urgent action. Within the International Organization of la Francophonie, this sense of urgency led to the adoption in March 2012 of an action plan on violence against women and girls, at the margins of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The International Organization of la Francophonie highlights the importance of establishing partnerships in the fight against this crime. In particular, we must play a vital role in partnership with civil society groups, including non-governmental organizations and the media.

Given the immensity of the task, what counts today is not achieving the end goal but moving forward, asking Member States to ratify the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and encouraging them to provide, to the extent possible, funds to stem the humanitarian disaster that is human trafficking. Bearing in mind that most actions should be taken at the local level, we believe that making individual Member States aware of their responsibilities is crucial to our ability to change the situation and do something concrete for the development of our societies.

We thank the international community, civil society organizations and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their significant efforts in this society-wide struggle. We are happy to see the outcomes of this crucial debate materialize on behalf of the youth of the twenty-first century, at a time when young people must meet the challenge of sustainable development, which concerns them most of all.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, I now call on the observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Ms. Getaneh (International Organization for Migration): As some here will recall, when the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was one of the first intergovernmental organizations working in the area of counter-trafficking in the mid-1990s, little was known about this modern-day form of slavery. Over the past 15 years, IOM, with our partners, has implemented over 882 projects in over 94 countries, trained tens of thousands of public and private representatives, and protected and assisted more than 30,000 victims of trafficking. In 2000, IOM created a global assistance fundamental that, with the financial support of Governments and private sector entities, has assisted over 1,500 victims of trafficking.

We are conscious, however, that the litmus test of our collective efforts to combat human trafficking has to be measured by the answer to a simple question. Have we significantly decreased the scale of the problem? The question is difficult to answer. We still do not know, for example, how many people are trafficked every year. Moreover, we have no reason to believe, or even suspect, that human trafficking is any less

prevalent than it was when we began our work nearly two decades ago.

With this in mind, I would like to highlight three areas in which, from the IOM perspective, more concerted effort is required.

First is the issue of protecting victims by protecting migrants. The identification of victims of trafficking remains one of the principal challenges to effective protection. By land, sea or air, migrants keep coming, despite the well-known risks of mishap, abuse and deaths, which are estimated in the thousands. Among irregular migrants, how many are trafficked? The process of identification is not an exact science, and there is often a fine line separating a trafficked person from an exploited or abused migrant. Yet, to positively identify a person as a victim of trafficking means that he or she may be eligible for temporary or permanent residence or other forms of assistance. An irregular migrant with similar needs often receives none of this, especially if he is male and does not fit a particular stereotype. Surely we would identify and protect more victims of trafficking if we prioritized the rights and needs of irregular migrants.

We must also address those traditional practices that we know exacerbate the vulnerability of migrants — perhaps most obviously the selective application of labour laws in certain sectors. We hear too many stories about migrant workers, in a regular or irregular situation, who work in labour-intensive sectors for wages well below the minimum required by law or the industry standard.

Let us not confuse the issue by calling it an immigration problem. This is a problem of exploitation, and yet the victims of these scenarios are generally more likely to be penalized for their minor role than are employers who profit from cheap, or even free illegal labour. There is no quick or easy way to strengthen our ability to identify and protect victims of trafficking, but a greater commitment to protecting all migrants regardless of status may be a precondition.

My second point is on preventing trafficking by discouraging demand. For too long, we have assumed that poverty or a lack of opportunities at home is the root cause of trafficking. But let us not mistake what we know to be common migration push factors for the root causes of human trafficking. It would seem that while such conditions can undoubtedly make people more vulnerable to trafficking, they are not the root causes of trafficking in persons as such. Unfortunately, the misallocation of root causes has proved to be a distraction, encouraging us to focus our prevention efforts disproportionately on the supply end of the human-trafficking chain in countries and communities of origin, rather than on the demand for the goods and services produced and provided by victims.

While hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on campaigns to raise awareness of trafficking among aspirant migrants in the vain hope that they will not be seduced by false offers of employment abroad, relatively little has been spent to prevent trafficking in the countries and communities where the victims are most likely to be exploited. IOM is working to redress that imbalance. In 2009, we started a pilot initiative, known as Buy Responsibly, which challenges conscientious consumers to ask what is behind the things we buy. We believe that if we can encourage such people to regularly seek assurances from their retailers that individual consumer products have not been produced by trafficked and exploited migrants, that in turn can encourage those retailers to prefer to stock items that are guaranteed to have been produced ethically.

Preventing trafficking in persons undoubtedly requires a sustained investment of time and resources, and it may be the most difficult of the "three Ps" to achieve. But surely we will succeed in preventing trafficking in persons only if we address the root causes directly. That means working to curtail the demand for the labour and services of trafficked persons, as well as the goods produced by their labour, and to reduce the profit margins for the perpetrators.

My final point is on partnerships. Trafficking is an organized crime that necessitates an organized response, and yet it is a phenomenon whose very nature seems designed to frustrate cooperation among those seeking to counter it. As international organizations, we have a great deal more work to do to strengthen our relationships in the fight against trafficking or we risk missing opportunities to leverage our comparative strengths in pursuit of our common goal.

Governments have a crucial role to play in encouraging private companies to be proactive. Public-private partnerships are critical if we are to make progress in the fight against human trafficking in the next decade. Only once we are able to effectively marshal the collective commitment and capacities of

national Governments, inter- and non-governmental organizations, as well as other civil society stakeholders, will we begin to make noticeable progress towards eradicating this crime.

Let me conclude today by saying that we have only just started and that whatever our achievements, they are modest and negligible in the face of the challenges that lie ahead.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for the high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

As previously announced, the General Assembly will now hear presentations by the Chairs of panel discussions 1 and 2 of the high-level meeting. After the presentations of the summaries, I will deliver closing remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to Mr. Martin Sajdik, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations and Chair of panel discussion 1.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria): Panel 1 united five fascinating speakers of truly different backgrounds. The first was Rani Hong, a child trade victim who, together with her husband, now runs an non-governmental organization that helps other victims of the crime of human trafficking to once and for all leave that terrible fate behind. Rani spoke to us as a survivor, but most of all she gave us hope that the common fight against the evil of human trafficking is not in vain.

Through the second speaker, Jim Clancy from CNN, we understood how media helped to raise awareness of a truly global audience for a truly global problem. CNN has been highlighting human trafficking in its different aspects and forms in its Freedom Project since 2011. Jim Clancy particularly emphasized the paramount importance of partnerships between media, Government structures and civil society, as only in partnership with one another can we crown the fight against human trafficking with success.

The third panelist, Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo of Nigeria, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, spoke of the need for partnerships and enhanced cooperation. Victims should benefit from remedies. The demand side is to be targeted as a root cause of human trafficking. In that respect, much more focus should be placed on preventative measures. Ms. Ezeilo called on all Member States to ratify the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, the Domestic Workers Convention of the International Labour Organization, as well as the Migrant Workers Convention.

The next speaker, Ms. Saisuree Chutikul of Thailand, member of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, presented us with a bleak overview of the weak support that Fund has enjoyed so far. Only $806,000 have been raised so far, enabling the financing of just 11 out of 250 projects. That is not even a meager 3 per cent of the estimated $30 billion yearly turnover of human trafficking. She asked not only Member States, but also other donors, to have a heart for the victims and to have a heart to give.

Kay Buck of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) introduced the audience to her successful groundwork in Los Angeles. CAST works with law firms on a pro-bono basis in civil cases against traffickers. It also trains the juvenile justice system to ensure that identified victims of human trafficking are not prosecuted for crimes they committed under pressure from their traffickers. Another element of CAST's work is to make survivors become self-sufficient members of the community.

The unfortunately too brief interactive discussion gave the opportunity to representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to speak about their experiences, ideas and concerns. An Indian NGO informed us about its activities to ensure free education for girls to prevent them from going into early fake marriages and prostitution. For that organization, partnership is not a choice but a necessity. Equality Now, an NGO from the United States of America, demanded that NGOs be consulted much more by United Nations agencies when formulating their policies on human trafficking.

The key word of panel 1 was undoubtedly "partnerships" — partnerships between Governments, NGOs and the media. The key role of NGOs in fighting the scourge of human trafficking was best highlighted by the words of Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo when she noted in her final statement that NGOs should raise their voices as they are the ones who work with the victims and provide trust and confidence to them.

To end my summary, I have to go back to the dire financial state of the Trust Fund. As Ms. Chutikul stated, the financing of programmes is not secured

for 2014 due to a lack of funds. In that respect, let me remind representatives of the closing sentence of the statement made by Rani Hong, a survivor of human trafficking. Rani said, "The survivors are counting on everyone in the room". We are not very many in the Hall now, but that is what she said. And when we had the first panel there were many more people so it was really poignant. The survivors are really counting on everyone in the room.

Let me take this opportunity, as the co-facilitator of this wonderful high-level meeting, to express my thanks and appreciation to my dear and esteemed co-facilitator and colleague, Mr. Antonio Lima of Cape Verde, for the always truly extraordinary cooperation that I have enjoyed with him. He is a man of conviction, with a big heart that beats for the victims of human trafficking. My thanks also go to Ambassador Lima's collaborator, Mr. José Mendonça, as well as to my colleagues in the Austrian Mission, Ms. Nadia Kalb and Mrs. Julia Thallinger, and last but not least to Ms. Simone Monasebian of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in New York.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima, Permanent Representative of Cape Verde to the United Nations and Chair of panel discussion 2.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde): Monday's panel discussion on the theme "Sharing best practices and lessons learned for prevention and prosecution in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and relevant legal instruments" was rich thanks to the active participation of civil society and Member States alike. We heard about the efforts that have been made and the lessons learned. I was encouraged to hear that some Member States found that certain approaches, laws or policies work for them and that they stand ready to work with others to see if their approaches could be duplicated successfully elsewhere. I was also grateful for the candid manner in which participants highlighted the challenges that still lie ahead and the areas where there is room for improvement.

First of all, our fight against trafficking in persons should focus foremost on prevention. Asking ourselves how to prevent an occurrence requires that one analyse the causes thereof. We heard from almost all speakers that the main underlying cause of human trafficking is a lack of development, which leads to poverty and desperation. In Ms. Puri's words, we must address the root structural causes of human trafficking, with a particular focus on women. Her Royal Highness Princess Mahidol also highlighted the particular challenges facing women and girls in rural areas and other vulnerable groups. Ensuring that women and children have adequate health care and education will ensure that they and men and boys are trained and aware of their rights. Development will grant them a chance to turn into healthy young people who have skills to find a job and are, as a result, less likely to fall into the trap of those very sophisticated trafficking networks.

Ambassador Lundborg rightly highlighted the role of corruption as an enabling factor for trafficking. Indeed, corruption and trafficking are closely interlinked. Human trafficking would not be possible without the many middlemen and middlewomen who make a profit on the way. Member States, in partnership with civil society, must redouble their efforts to focus on that very difficult challenge.

Princess Mahidol's recommendation that the fight against human trafficking be made part and parcel of the post-2015 development discussions in Qatar in 2015 is an important one, as is Ms. Baderschneider's suggestion, from the private sector angle, that investing in businesses in local communities is another way to increase development. Creating jobs, training staff and raising workforce productivity are all very much in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

The panel highlighted the fact that awareness-raising and advocacy must be undertaken in a comprehensive and holistic manner with a particular focus on schools, families of potential victims, and traffickers — all involving cities, towns and villages.

But prevention is not only the responsibility of those countries that lose their children, men and women to traffickers. It is just as much the responsibility of receiving countries. One participant rightly noted, for example, that countries have their own challenges to face cannot fight human trafficking alone; they must be able to count on the transit and destination countries to work preventively.

Prevention on the destination side means that those receiving trafficked persons ask themselves what makes their country so interesting for traffickers. Why does the demand persist? I was intrigued by Ambassador Lundborg's example of the Swedish law which, he noted, is now supported by 70 per cent of the Swedish

population and aims to prevent traffickers from seeking Sweden out as a destination country.

It is through the exchange of experiences such as the aforementioned that we learn from each other about what may work and what may not in the different contexts in which we operate. I remember perfectly that the representative of Nigeria made exactly that point.

I was encouraged by another example shared by Ms. Baderschneider, formerly of Exxon Mobil. The company found ways to prevent human trafficking through awareness-raising and norm-setting in the business community. If Governments encourage or mandate businesses to eliminate the demand for forced labour, traffickers will lose their markets. Companies and Governments can enhance their budding practices, audit their suppliers, train employees and work with civil society on the supply-chain assessment toolkit that is being prepared.

The second main topic of our panel discussion was the need for increased investigations and prosecutions of traffickers. The succinct final statement made by the civil society representative from Vital Voices Global Partnership summed up one of our main challenges. She asked those who have expressed their full commitment to the Global Plan of Action how we can, together, turn those statements into actions and attain higher prosecution numbers.

Ms. Puri of UN-Women shared her experience from the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which focused on the criminalization of trafficking offences and the need for increased accountability. She highlighted the fact that current conviction rates are unacceptable and referred to what she called a knowledge crisis. One participant added that prosecution should also take place in destination countries.

Her Royal Highness Princess Mahidol, echoed by others, reflected on the need to ensure that legislative frameworks and legal procedures are in place to allow for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. She rightly noted that investigations and prosecutions should be conducted by well-trained officials based on evidence and carefully collected data.

Ambassador Lundborg concluded by saying that if corruption and human trafficking were more frequently prosecuted, leading to rightful convictions, then part of those $34 billion in assets would become available and could be returned to where they came from. Such recovered assets could be used by Governments to assist victims in need, which is an additional incentive to step up law enforcement training and the implementation of the prosecution pillar of the Global Plan of Action.

At this juncture, let me transmit to the General Assembly the short message my Minister Ms. Marisa Helena Morais wanted to deliver during the panel discussion:

> "Yesterday was a very interesting day with proficuous statements and testimony, and I personally believe that we shared useful practices. However, the concern with financing was always present, along with the recognition that we are fighting a more than $30 billion industry."

Let me share with the Assembly something we are trying to do in Cape Verde. It is a very recent undertaking, and we cannot say that we already have obtained practical results. We have recently created a fund for the management of assets and goods seized in the pursuit of the fight against direct trafficking. The fund will be used to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary and security forces and provide protection and assistance to victims. These allocations have already been approved by Parliament. I am glad to announce that Cape Verde will be contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, using resources from the fund I have just mentioned.

We believe that the success of the fight against organized crime depends mostly on the ability to seize profits and goods earned through the practice of crime. In so doing, we are really combating impunity, and we believe that the best destination for those profits and goods will always be their use in protecting and assisting the victims.

Finally, several speakers shared an important point about the need for political will and accountability at the highest levels, and highlighted the important role of civil society. My colleague Ambassador Sajdik, whom I thank for his kind words about me and my team, has already touched on partnership, assistance for victims and the need for cooperation and for continued and predictable resources as we continue to fight human trafficking. Though much more was said, I will end my summary here. I would also like to thank again my colleague from Austria and his team, as well as my team and all those who took part in the sometimes very

tough discussions leading up to this high-level meeting on human trafficking. It is important for me, and for all of us, to be present today and to say that we want to stop human trafficking.

The Acting President: We have come to the end of a hard and thought-provoking high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, but we still have miles to go before we can proclaim that all human beings are born free and none are held in slavery or servitude, as the Assembly envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights more than 60 years ago. It is not often that a meeting of this kind lasts two days, and that in itself is testimony to the increased focus and dedication that Member States are devoting to the issue of modern-day slavery. But we must go further.

I would first like to take this opportunity to again thank the co-facilitators of this event, the Permanent Representatives of Cape Verde and Austria, Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima and Mr. Martin Sajdik, for their excellent efforts to make this high-level meeting a provocative and illuminating one. Their important Chairs' summaries highlighted the illuminating and frank discussions in which Member States and civil society engaged yesterday. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his commitment to this meeting and the cause, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and his team for their expertise and invaluable contribution. Finally, I would like to thank all those here, including the representatives of civil society and the participants in the panels, plenary and side events, for ensuring that this event was well attended by ministers and other distinguished representatives from near and far.

The statements and proposals made in the course of this meeting have been enlightening. They have reminded us how much we can do to tackle this heinous crime, despite the diverse contexts in which we all operate. Some of us are transit countries; others are countries of origin or destination; and some of us may face two or three of those challenges in our countries at the same time. Many best practices were outlined during the meeting, as were the challenges of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In accordance with resolution 67/190, we will soon produce a summary of the meeting, identifying the achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan and the relevant legal instruments, but for now I will briefly highlight five of them.

First, too many Member States have still not ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and implementation is lagging among many who ratified it years ago. Passing legislation that criminalizes trafficking in persons and at the same time protects the rights of victims is a step in the right direction. However, such legislation means nothing if it is not being implemented by our law-enforcement agencies, lawyers and judges. As a result, impunity for human trafficking crimes remains a considerable problem, and one that we must confront in our lifetime.

Secondly, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is indispensable to our fight against human trafficking. It is mostly NGOs that work with victims on the ground. Member States must continue to learn from civil society and redouble their efforts to seek their input and guidance in implementing the Global Plan of Action.

Thirdly, there is a real need for increased cooperation, partnerships and technical assistance in order to better implement the Global Plan of Action and the relevant legal instruments. In addition to bilateral and multilateral exchanges and better coordination among United Nations entities, particularly the 16 that form the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, there is a dire need to develop partnerships with the media and the private sector, and to focus on a bottom-up approach, where appropriate. This will ensure that our prevention work focuses on the villages and towns where sophisticated trafficking routes often start.

Fourthly, many speakers reflected on the need for increased coordination, research and data. More must be done in those areas. Many also noted the extent to which they rely on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in these areas, on the ground as well as at the intergovernmental level. As the main United Nations entity mandated to fight human trafficking, it currently has only two regular-budget posts dedicated to this area. I echo the call of many to strengthen UNODC's capacity so it can continue to assist us with the great task ahead.

Fifthly, there is the disparity between the criminal income of the human-trafficking industry, some billions of dollars a year, and the comparatively meagre funds dedicated to preventing and responding to this crime. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for

Victims of Human Trafficking, Especially Women and Children, one of the most important aspects of the Global Plan of Action, has done much with the very small resources it has received, and cannot continue to fulfil its mandate without robust and reliable funding. I would like to sincerely thank Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Belarus, the United Arab Emirates, Australia, Austria, the Kingdom of Thailand and Singapore for the pledges they made to the Trust Fund during this meeting, and hope that they will inspire others to contribute to the Fund. We owe it to our young girls, boys, women and men, as Goodwill Ambassador Mira Sorvino put it, to provide alternatives to "being swept up by traffickers into a sea of anonymous suffering" (*A/67/PV.77, p. 6*). The victims are counting on us today.

Despite the challenges ahead of us, I am encouraged by the overwhelming political will that has been voiced in this Hall to step up the fight against trafficking in persons. Let us capitalize on that momentum and re-energize ourselves to eradicate this atrocious phenomenon once and for all.

The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is now concluded.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 103?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.